

Shapcott Barton
Syn Chenutdestana (East Knowstone Manor)
Annual Report 2018

Shapcott Barton (Chenutdestana) has been in existence since before 1066 and is mentioned in the Domesday Book. Quote: - "Algar has a manor called Chenutdestana" meaning the stone of Canut, and the name from which Knowstone got its name.

It is a modest sized ancient manor house.

The definition of a true manor house is where court was held. It was here that court was held first in the hall of the ground floor and then in Elizabethan times and later in the upstairs court room, where a frieze of Pegasus the winged horse depicts the triumph of good over evil.

The Shapcott's were descendants of Algar and they lived here for over 700 years and were all lawyers and landowners. The property has a long and interesting history and has only changed hands a few times. The Shapcott family have done a lot to research their family tree and I have over the last 20 odd years added to that knowledge. I spent 10 years putting a book together on its history but someone stole it on one of our garden open days – so I now have to be far more vigilant.

Henry Williamson, author of 'Tarka the Otter' wrote about Shapcott in his book 'A Clear Water Stream'. In it he writes about old things including an old frying pan. He goes on to write "Feelings for such old things were strong in me – later I discovered a possible reason in that my mother's family of Shapcott had lived only a few miles away on the edge of the moor at Knowstone".

Reading this prompted me to write a poem about another 'old thing' – My lovely Copper Warming Pan (Attached).

We continue to look after this ancient property and the farmland, and now have a more satisfactory arable contractor.

Every year we undertake a bit more conservation work using traditional lime mortars which allow buildings to breath. The lime mortars eventually carbonate back to limestone and are softer than cementaceous mortars which have no place in ancient buildings.

My collection of old farm and garden tools has reached such proportions that I have been encouraged to restore the garden room to put them in for the public to see on garden open days.

The stones from which the property was built were quarried here on the farm and are geologically interesting. It is when I am looking for stones to repair parts of the property that I come across interesting fossils and sedimentary formations from the Carboniferous era.

I am being visited by Simon Crowhurst in June, a sedimentary research geologist at Cambridge university and he has kindly sent me a lot of information on the photographic samples I sent him of some of the rocks.

I knew his father Donald Crowhurst who some of you older residents may remember. He disappeared on a round the world yacht race about 50 years ago. A Hollywood film 'The Mercy' starring Colin Firth as Crowhurst has recently been released about that voyage. After 50 years people are still interested in this saga. Some of you may have read the book "The Strange Voyage of Donald Crowhurst", (a bit like the Lord Lucan saga).

I happened to tell someone that I knew Donald when I was a science lecturer in Bridgewater College in the late 1960's and the next thing I knew, a full page article of some of this information appeared in the Sunday Express recently, entitled 'Lone yachtsman had a secret love when he set sail'. Some of you may have seen this. (Attached article)

The stones of which Shapcott are built are variable – some have iron deposits in them, some are red sandstone and others bluish limestone. Some look like anthracite. It will be interesting to find out more about their geological origins. Simon tells me that 300 million years ago there must have been massive underwater mudslides in the ocean where Knowstone now is.

We continue to have the garden here open to the public, under the Plant Heritage and NGS schemes – the latter raising money for the cancer charities. The weather this year forced us to have to cancel 2 of the April events for safety reasons. The old narcissi stood up well to the weather and flowered later than usual. "White Lady" perfuming the air well into early May.

Anyone with an interest in any of the subjects I have mentioned is welcome to visit after phoning.

Finally and very importantly we would like to thank all those kind people who, in whatever way, helped to find our peafowl which were spooked last year by something, causing them to disappear. Thankfully they were all found.

Here's hoping for a better twelve months at Shapcott.

Anita Allen

Attachments:- Poem and article on Crowhurst

My Old Copper Warming Pan – By Anita D. Allen

Hanging in the hallway,
Against a lime washed wall;
A treasured sunlit warming pan
Gleams brightly in the morn.
So many hands have handled thee
Since when you first were formed;
So many hearts you've gladdened
On cold dark frosty dawns.

At first you warmed the beds of men
And hearts of many a maid,
Who filled you with the embers
From the dying fireplace laid.
Your battered face bears witness
To all the toil you slaved.
Your handle has been carried
Up many ancient stairs,
To warm the beds of lovers,
Sweet dreams with whom you shared.

The ghosts of many a forebear
Still see you in the hall,
Remembering all the pleasures
That you gave to one and all.

Now with the passage of the times
You have a well-earned rest,
Hanging in the hallway
Looking at your best.
But still you give a pleasure
When you shine upon my face,
My lovely copper warming pan
With such eternal grace.

Lone yachtsman had a secret love when he set sail



PROPOSAL: Anita as a student in 1966 and, right, Gaila Pith and Rachel Weiss in *The Mercy*



DEBARRACKED yachtsman Donald Crowhurst planned to abandon his wife and family for a secret love two years before he faked a solo round-the-world voyage and then vanished in the ocean.

Crowhurst, portrayed in Hollywood movie *The Mercy*, had hoped to start a life in South America with a college lecturer, 11 years his junior.

But when Anita Allen rejected his physical advances, he put a knife in her throat and smashed her, leaving her bleeding for her life.

The college lecturer, then 21, has spoken about the dark side of Donking Donald after the release of the film which stars Colin Firth as the sailor and Rachel Weiss as his wife Gaila.

It charts his descent into madness and mysterious fate somewhere in the freezing South Atlantic where his boat was found drifting and empty in 1969.

Mrs Allen, 74, said: "He had been a regular visitor to my home for about six months. We got on extremely well, but purely on an intellectual level."

"So I was amazed when he suddenly declared his deep love for me. There had never been any hint of physical attraction on my part. He wanted us to 'disappear' together to South America, where he said he had business contacts.

"He had it all planned out and assured me that his wife and

EXCLUSIVE

By **Ted Hyndes**

family would be taken care of. So I was not too worried about them.

"I was shocked by his feelings and told him in no uncertain terms I wanted nothing more to do with him."

Fighting back the tears, she added: "It was pure fantasy. I had given him no encouragement. I thought he was very bright. That was all."

"He did not take rejection quietly. He assaulted me, then put a knife to my throat. I truly thought I was going to die. I was terrified. Thinking about it after all these years is very distressing."

Crowhurst was a late entrant in the Golden Globe non-stop solo circumnavigation yacht race in 1968. But soon after setting sail his ultramarathon Triumphant Electron began to fall apart.

Realising he had no chance of the £2,000 top prize he faked his log books to make it appear he had rounded Cape Hope and Cape Horn.

Facing exposure, the 37-year-old thought he had better overboard, or jumped to avoid disgrace.

Mrs Allen said: "Looking back it's clear that Don was a womaniser and I was too young and naive to recognise it then."



WOMANISER: Crowhurst

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