

About *The Thirteenth Box*

The mysterious machine

The telephone was invented in 1876 by Alexander Graham Bell. But other people were also trying to invent such a device. American inventor, Elisha Gray, also filed a patent and Italian man, Antonio Meucci, also invented a telephone in 1871, but didn't renew his patent.

Signals were first transmitted in France in the late 18th century and it is not impossible that the thoughts of inventors were turning to creating a machine to help people to talk to each other across distances. However the machine in *The Thirteenth Box* is simply an invention for this book.

Smuggling and Christchurch

In the 18th and early 19th centuries Christchurch was an ideal place for smugglers. The town's geographical location on the coast with its beaches and large harbour with narrow entrance was ripe for bringing in contraband.

The large navy cutters (ships) were too big to get through the Run at Mundeford – spelled Muddiford on maps at the time. Here was the site of the famous Battle of Mundeford in 1784.

The harbour was large, plus Stanpit Marsh has inlets where the smugglers could hide. The most famous one is Mother Sillers Channel, which enabled goods to be landed at The Ship in Distress public house in Stanpit.

Why did people smuggle goods?

England was at war. Across the Atlantic battles of the American War of Independence were taking place and many soldiers were there fighting. Taxes were being raised to pay for the war. There was no tax on what people earned (income tax) in 1780 and money was raised by paying duty (tax) on goods coming into the country. By smuggling the payment of duty was avoided. Smugglers were also called Free Traders because of this. Tea, brandy, silks and many other items were smuggled. Smuggling took place all around England's coast. The war also meant that there were few soldiers to guard the shores from smuggling. Customs Officers and Riding Officers were employed. The nearest customs houses to Christchurch were at Poole and Southampton. But the riding officers were usually local men who often turned a blind eye to the smuggling.

Glossary

Life was quite different in 1780 when our tale is told. Here are some of the words, people and places you will find in this story.

Anker – A small barrel, usually containing brandy

Bone Box – An 18th-century term for the mouth

Cod's head – A rude insult, meaning a stupid person

Contredanse – A French version of English country dances, where couples danced in lines

Dinner – Dinner was the main meal of the day and was eaten in the late afternoon. Other meals were breakfast and supper.

Dragoons – Soldiers. The Dragoons in Christchurch didn't actually arrive until the 1790s, when the barracks were built. Any soldiers at the time would have lived with local families or in ale houses, but mostly they were abroad fighting.

Fart followers – a rude name for footmen whose job could include following behind their masters and mistresses, sometimes holding their coats to prevent them getting covered in mud and dirt.

Free Grammar School – the school Danny attended was held in St Michael's loft in Christchurch Priory. The boys would start very early and would often be chosen for their voices as they also sang at services. The loft is a now a small museum. Also, it is said signals were given from here to the smugglers out at sea – and you can still see the little window from where the signals were sent.

Ice House – These were pits dug into the earth often with a brick dome. Ice from rivers and ponds would have been placed in the pit and covered with straw to keep it as long as possible. Food was kept cold and ice used in ices.

Leather coverings – were used by smugglers on cart wheels and to cover horses' hooves, to make them as quiet as possible when moving smuggled goods.

Middling – People neither rich nor poor. More people at this time were becoming trades people and merchants with a reasonable income.

Mr Brander – Gustavus Brander was a fellow of the Royal Society and a Trustee of the British Museum. He built the house which is now Priory House. His archaeological excavations of the cliffs at Highcliffe and Barton resulted in the collection of fossil shells still stored at the Museum. He also excavated the ruins of the Priory buildings destroyed on the orders of Henry III.

Mr Clingan's Trust – This is a charity set up in Christchurch in 1746 by John Clingan to help the boys and girls of Christchurch into apprenticeships. It still exists today and young people can apply for small grants, particularly to help with studies.

The Necessary – Perinne's polite term for the toilet. Some grand houses had the first water closets at this time. Toilets were holes in the ground, sometimes covered with wooden boards with holes to sit on. People had chamber pots, kept under the bed, to use at night time. Poor people would have dung heaps close to their houses.

Noddle – Head

Ostler – This is a stableman who would look after the horses at inns

Poor House – Where people who could not support themselves would live. This could be whole families or orphans. In Christchurch, the Poor House became the Workhouse and is the building that is now the Red House Museum.

Press Gangs – Press gangs were used to recruit sailors for the navy, but many were violent. Gangs of men would offer a shilling – the King's shilling – but men were

often tricked and taken against their will. The rules were men had to be between 18 and 55 years old.

Reverend Jackson – Reverend William Jackson was Vicar of Christchurch from 1778 to 1802. The character Adam Jackson is an invention for the story.

Riding Officers – men employed to try to prevent smuggling, though most were local men and involved in the trade.

Small beer – this was the name for a very weak beer and was given to children. Water was not very clean and small beer was often a safer drink.

Smugglers – People did not pay income tax in 1780 so to raise money for the country – mainly to pay for wars – duty was payable on items brought in from abroad. This made many items expensive and smugglers brought goods into the coves and harbours of the coast of Britain to sell and make money. Many people depended upon smuggling to live.

Spout lamp – These lamps were used by smugglers to signal to each other. They had a spout on the side which was covered and uncovered when the lamp was lit it.

Tallow – Tallow was made from animal fat and was used to make candles. Beeswax candles were more expensive and tallow was often all the poor could afford, but it smelled bad!

Tea – Yes, you all know what tea is – but did you know that in the 18th century it was very expensive? Tea was often kept in boxes with locks! Tea was one of the things most commonly smuggled.

Venturers – People, mostly wealthy, who funded smuggling by providing boats and other help.

Places in Christchurch

Here are places in Christchurch mentioned in *The Thirteenth Box* that you can still visit (v) or see:

Christchurch Priory & St Michael's Loft (School room) (v)
The Red House Museum (Poor House) (v)
Place Mill (v)
The Castle (v)
The Old House (the Constable's House) (v)
The George (v) public house
The Eight Bells (v) shop
The Ship (v) public house
The Ship in Distress (v) public house
The Marshes (Stanpit Marsh) (v)
Mundeford (v)
Quomps (v)
Dr Quartley's house still stands but is a private residence.

There remain some old cottages in Burton similar to the one Danny would have lived in.

Will's old cottage would have stood near to the by-pass where a car park now stands.

There was no such place as Cliff House. There was a building called High Cliff and this was replaced in the early 19th century by Highcliffe Castle.

The Bargate was destroyed in 1744 but there is a road, Bargates, in the town centre.

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England Vol III* _ B.T. Batsford Ltd 1961
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2007

Other sources

Christchurch Local History Society, Local History Room
The Red House Museum and Gardens

Paintings

A lot of information about the way people lived and of their clothes and belongings can be found in pictures painted at the time. Here are some of the artists whose pictures I looked at:

George Morland
Thomas Gainsborough
Elizabeth Louise Vigée Le Brun
William Hogarth

The internet

www.britishmuseum.org
www.3.hants.gov.uk/archives
<http://www.heritage.nf.ca/exploration/18fishery.html>
<http://www.smuggling.co.uk/>
<http://www.british-history.ac.uk/report.aspx?compid=42054>