

Devon History News



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• NEWSLETTER OF THE DEVON HISTORY SOCIETY •



FROM THE EDITOR

It's that time of year again and this issue of the newsletter comes with the annual announcement of yet another AGM. This AGM is special, though – it's the Society's fortieth!

As you will see from the enclosed AGM programme, its theme is Devon Landscapes, Places and People. Speakers will include Dr Tom Greeves and Dr Todd Gray so we are assured of an interesting and stimulating day.

Elsewhere in this issue, Elizabeth Maycock writes about the proposed 40th Anniversary Book which seems to be coming along nicely; Journal editor Andrew Jackson reflects upon the changes in county landscapes he has encountered since his move to Lincolnshire three years ago and Anne Howard writes about recent events at the Westcountry Studies Library. An insight into some of the work of the Parishscapes Project is given by Phil Planel and Shirley Purves writes an appreciation of DHS past-chairman, Adrian Reed, whose death was announced earlier in the year.

Finally, this is the sixth issue of Devon History News, which was launched three years ago. I have edited it from the beginning and I hope that the last six issues have gone some way towards improving communications between Council and the membership and in giving that membership, including the affiliated societies, a greater sense of belonging. However, I think that having successfully launched it, now is the time for me to hand over to a new editor who can bring in new ideas and develop new approaches. I shall therefore stand down as editor at October's AGM.

Issue 7 is due out in February 2011. If you think you might be interested in becoming its editor, please contact me. My details are on the back cover.

Chris Jago (Editor)

NOTICE OF ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The 40th Annual General Meeting of the Society will take place on Saturday 9th October 2010 in the Lecture Theatre of the Peninsula Medical School at St Luke's Campus in Heavitree Road, Exeter. Details of the programme are given in the enclosed sheet. All are welcome.

Margaret Lewis (Secretary)

Update From the Programme Secretary

The 2010 programme marked the start of an extended series of events for members. In addition to the annual spring and summer meetings, we aimed to offer seminars in venues around the county. The primary focus has been on methods and sources for local historians.

The first seminar was given by Helen Turnbull, whose presentation highlighted the vast range of material stored in the Clifford family archive at Ugbrooke House. As well as outlining the history of a major Devon Catholic family, Helen also demonstrated the potential of the archive in researching Devon's broader history.

Our spring meeting was hosted by Honiton Local History Society, whose varied programme included a talk by Mary Wardell on the history of Honiton lace, as well as a presentation on the pre-history of East Devon. Both were illuminated by interesting visual material. Devon history Society members and guests also enjoyed an excellent homemade lunch. A catered lunch such as that provided by the Honiton group has become a popular feature of recent history meetings, giving members an opportunity to socialise informally and to exchange ideas.

Phil Planel's informative seminar at the East Devon Business Centre on landscape sources for historians was well received, and this will be followed up in the 2011 programme by a one on 'Maps, plans, prints and pictures – visual evidence for local historians'.

An excellent summer meeting was hosted by Petrockstowe Local History Group. This small group of eight members recently spent several years researching and producing an award winning local history book, Petrockstowe Past and Present. The project provided many opportunities for outreach, and for participation by the local community. Mic and Jenny Wright's presentation on the process involved in the book production and publication was of much interest to members, as was the fascinating history of the clay works outlined by George Copp. David Kelsey's quiz on farming implements was enjoyed by all, and the lucky winner (membership secretary, Gerald Quinn) received a box of home grown vegetables.

The forthcoming September visit to Devon Record Office, led by the County Archivist, will include a tour of the strong room where many documents are stored. It will also include an orientation and introduction to finding research aids. Judy Moss's seminar at Tiverton Museum in November will focus on the

use of primary sources for constructing a medieval life. The 2011 programme aims to offer members a similarly varied programme, and I will be happy to receive any suggestions from members regarding potential seminar topics and venues for forthcoming programmes.

Jane Bliss (Programme Secretary)

DHS ANNIVERSARY BOOK

Since the last newsletter significant progress has been made. By 31 May, or soon after, thirty five articles had been received, covering a wide variety of subjects and locations across the county. A number of these were accompanied by photographs and prints as well as tables, of which we hope to reproduce as many as possible. The editors have been encouraged by this good response and are now tackling the arduous tasks of selection and editing.

Council have been informed of developments to date, and Shirley Purves has been invited to take the chair at our recent meetings. The Society treasurer, Graham Bliss, also attended our latest meeting on 28 July, so that he could assess the financial aspects of producing the book. He gave his report at the Council meeting on 31st July and they also heard our progress report. This clears the way for Council to consider, at the next meeting on 18th September, whether we may go ahead and place the order with the printers.

Meanwhile, the editors will be busy text-reading and considering each article in detail. To this end, they have divided the articles as evenly as possible between the four of them. One or two offers of help at this stage have been received and may well be taken up to lighten the load.

In some cases the editors may ask for expert advice where they do not feel knowledgeable enough on the subject to edit a contribution constructively.

After the September Council meeting, the editors will prepare their detailed report for the AGM on 9 October, when all DHS members will be fully informed about the project with time for discussion.

Elizabeth Maycock

Three years ago, Journal editor, Andrew Jackson, moved with his family from Clyst Honiton in Devon to Lincolnshire, to take up an appointment at Bishop Grosseteste University College, Lincoln. Here, Andrew briefly reflects on some of the differences and similarities in their respective landscapes.

Devonshire and Lincolnshire landscapes compared

In 2007 I moved from a village a few miles out from the city of Exeter, Clyst Honiton, to a village a similar distance from Lincoln, Dunholme. In my first encounters with the Lincolnshire landscape, I found the countryside and villages to the north of Lincoln very different from those to the east of Exeter.

The two landscape types seemed quite contrasting from one another in their colour and character. In Lincolnshire the green is golden, I observed; in Devonshire its tone is deeper. In Lincolnshire the hedgerows are low and patchy, the fields large and geometrical, and the soils a drab brown; in Devon hedgerows are higher and thicker, fields smaller and more irregular, and soils a rich red. In Devonshire the land rolls and the high hills can oppress, while glimpses of a horizon are rare; in Lincolnshire the land lies flat, low hills leave the skies big and bright, and the horizons are more distant.

First impressions continued to build. In the Devon countryside the villages are more hidden, encountered suddenly at the turn of a sharp bend, or upon the descent of a steep hill. In Lincolnshire villages seem more obvious to the bypasser, usually heralded some while off by a church tower or spire standing tall and lean upon a flat and relatively treeless landscape. Within the villages contrasts in appearance continue. The Devonshire cottage is typically and traditionally cob-walled, its sides daubed white, and its roof of thatch or grey slate; the Lincolnshire cottage is stone walled, yellow in colour, and its roof in terracotta tile. Many churches in Devon, and certainly around Exeter, are of a red and rough sandstone; in Lincolnshire they are of a cream stone and more finely dressed.

Despite the overwhelming impressions of difference in those early days, various similarities soon became apparent. Both Dunholme and Clyst Honiton are old rural parishes, with medieval churches at their centre, scatterings of cottages along lanes, and a few farms dispersed among enclosed fields. Neither were large, nucleated settlements; both, though, grew and infilled a great deal in the twentieth, and more especially in the late-twentieth, century. The explanation for the growth of each can be found, or rather heard, in a near constant hum. From

Clyst Honiton it is the hum of the A30, the old London road in and out of Exeter; in Dunholme it is the hum of the A46, the Grimsby road in and out of Lincoln. Main road connection, together with proximity to a regional city, has brought to these places similarities in both physical character and cultural outlook, in particular in recent times.

In these two places, and in the countryside about, the passing of time is all around to behold. The striking and the subtle, the ancient and the modern, and the pleasing and the displeasing, coincide and coalesce.

Andrew Jackson

FROM THE WEBMASTER

The Devon History Society's website has been in operation for some years. Regular users will have noticed that it changed to 'blogger format' in 2008. Although at first sight this makes the website more complex, the new format allowed greater flexibility of content and ease of editing. More recent developments include an online version of the society's Newsletter, a downloadable and printable membership application form and a subject index to current and past issues of The Devon Historian. Finally, the links to other relevant websites are continually reviewed and added to when appropriate.

As with other DHS activities, feedback is welcomed. If you have not done so already, please take a look at the website (devonhistorysociety.org.uk). No user name or password is needed, and your comments, to me (sadru@bhanji.flife.co.uk) or to the webmaster (ray@raygirvan.co.uk), will be much appreciated. We will be pleased to hear also from those organisations or individuals wishing to use the website to publicise their activities.

Sadru Bhanji

Anne Howard was appointed as Local Studies Librarian in the Westcountry Studies Library at the end of 2007. She has spent much of the past two and half years learning about the contents of what is a marvelous collection and a treasure trove of resources for the local and family historians, an example of which adorns our front cover. Here, Anne sets out some of the library's features.

The Westcountry Studies Library

Whilst the Westcountry Studies Library only dates from 1975, the origins of the collection can be traced back to the late 19th century, when a reference and local studies collection was formed at the Royal Albert Memorial Museum. The collection continued to grow and was transferred to the new Exeter City Library during the 1930s. This building was badly damaged during the blitz, but luckily most of the local studies stock had already been removed to a place of safety. Unfortunately, a lack of space in the immediate post war period and also in the new 1960s Exeter Central Library meant that most of the local studies stock remained in store until the opening of the Westcountry Studies Library.

A new era for the Westcountry Studies Library began in 2005 with the departure of the Devon Record Office from the Castle Street premises. With the resulting expansion of storage space and a complete refurbishment, the library was able to completely reorganize the collection and begin to make available to the public material that had been in store for decades. The building is presently shared with the Devon Register Office and the Devon Biodiversity Group.

Describing the contents of the resources available is a challenge but in addition to the obvious printed sources the greater part of the collection consists of the illustrations, drawings, prints, photographs, glass plate negatives and lantern slides which together are in many ways the core of the collection. Our aim is to make these as widely available as possible and a digitization programme is in place which ensures that these items are being systematically scanned and catalogued and added to the webpage. This work is vital both because it makes the collection widely accessible and because it encourages the use of the digital images so that the originals are preserved for the future. Work on the images from The Exeter Pictorial Record Society has recently been completed and they have been added to the web pages.

The Devon Photographic Donor card was launched in April, encouraging individuals to donate unwanted photographs of local interest to the collection. Two other main parts of the collection are the maps and the local newspapers.

The collection of maps consists of the first and second edition Ordnance Survey, dated around 1890 and 1904 for the county of Devon on microfiche at 1:10000 and 1:2500 scales (6", 25"). Large scale mapping for the centre of Exeter @ 1:500 dated from 1870 is also available on fiche. Post war large scale ordnance survey mapping is available in hard copy. The collection also includes early county maps, road maps which cover the main shopping centre of the urban areas, admiralty charts, soil survey, land use, geological maps and administrative maps.

The earliest newspaper held dates from 1720 but the main run is the Exeter Flying Post which is available on microfiche. This can also be accessed by all members of Devon Libraries by viewing the British Library 19th century newspapers database. The local newspapers are indexed and a cuttings file arranged by parish is maintained. A recent find has been the collection of notes which was put together by members of The Devonshire Association on parish histories. These have been refiled and organized by parish.

Exhibitions and events are ongoing and in partnership with Exeter Local History Society we are planning the 2011 Local History Day, so make a date in your diaries for February 26th 2011.

We also want to encourage young people and schools and are hoping that by embracing new technology we will enthuse this audience. So take a look on You Tube and search under Westcountry Studies Library. You will hear and see memories of Exeter. This is something that we want to do more of.

Do look on the webpages at www.devon.gov.uk/localstudies

Anne Howard
Westcountry Studies Library

The Parishscapes Project 2007-10

The Parish Scapes Project came to a conclusion last May. Phil Planel reports.

Over the course of its three year life, the Parishscapes volunteer researchers developed a suite of resources, on-line tithe maps and apportionments, etc. (<http://www.eastdevonaonb.org.uk/Digitaltithemaps.ht>) for local historians to use. Towards the end of the project it was clear that some volunteers wanted to go a step further and do a bit of original research; the Disappeared Houses study group was born! These houses feature on the 1840 Tithe Map and have since

been abandoned. A recording form was developed in conjunction with Devon Historic Environment Record and preliminary investigations revealed a number of sites that shared common characteristics and possibly a common fate. Following this audit, work concentrated on two neighbouring upland valleys in Offwell and Northleigh.



In Offwell the policy was to begin clearance of a large abandoned farm house called Aplins (known as Applehayes in the 18th century). However, a different initiative was adopted in Northleigh.

1840 tithe map showing holdings as described in the apportionment schedule in the Summerdown study area

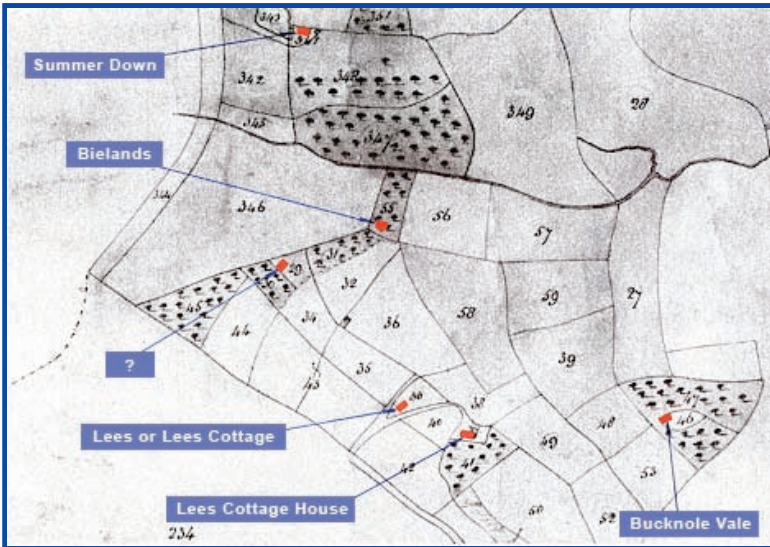
The Summertown Study Area

The area (map above) was divided into five holdings c1840 – a historic landscape of small farms. By modern standards these were very small, though at the time they may also have had access to common grazing, a valuable resource. Astonishingly, given the state of the land today, most of the plots are described in the apportionment as arable – though arable may mean ploughable rather than actually under the plough at the time. Each of the four holdings, had their own orchard. The cottage and its plot of land (33, outlined in yellow) selected for excavation in March 2010, was too small to furnish a living, though it had enough land for a large garden. Although each of the farms consisted of several fields, they only average between three and six acres each.

On the ground it was clear that not only had these fields reverted to woodland but the lower lying areas are now impenetrable bog; huge amounts of labour must have been constantly expended in the drainage of this land.

Linking People and Places

The main problem in linking people with the four tithe map farmsteads and one cottage was that we couldn't match the families and house names on the censuses with the houses shown on the tithe map or the remains on the ground. The names of houses in the censuses are floating names, not anchored to any map. However, Ron Woodcock, a Northleigh volunteer, worked out the enumerator's route for each 19th century census and came up with the hypothesis that the house we were about to excavate may have been Lees Cottage - see map below. This was the state of knowledge when the excavation, directed by Hazel Riley, began.



Hypothetical house names in the Summerdown Study area.

Unless mad, bad, sick or destitute, the documentary evidence concerning the lives of ordinary Victorians is very sparse. We hoped that archaeological excavation would tell us more about this abandoned farming landscape - people do not tend to leave their homes voluntarily; but we had no idea how easy this would be.

The excavation proceeded slowly due to adverse weather. But, in addition to a number of small finds, a fine lime and ash floor came to light, together with a bread oven and related ironwork. It was amongst the debris of the latter that an inscription appeared, see below, which, in one fell swoop, positively identified the house as Lees Cottage and meant that, using the census evidence, we could

now populate all the houses in this disappeared landscape and tell the story of when each farmstead was in turn abandoned. Which all goes to show that history and archaeology can complement each other.



The inscription that changed everything
Phil Planel

ADRIAN REED 1921 to 2010 (immediate past Chairman of the DHS.)

Adrian Harbottle Reed was a true son of Devon. He was born in Exeter in 1921 and educated first at Norwood from 1927, and then at Heles's School (now St Peter's) from 1933 till 1939, when he went up to Emmanuel College Cambridge. As an only child, in a warm and happy household, he gained his love of books from his father, "...whose book-cases lined the walls wherever they could stand, with shelves two volumes deep...."

In September 1942 he joined up, via the University OTC, and was commissioned into the 70th Tank Regiment, seeing service in the Middle East and Italy. After demob, came a spell in the India office in London, before being posted to Rawalpindi in Pakistan and then to Southern Rhodesia. By 1960, he held a First Secretary's post in Dublin. He later took over the Far East and Pacific Department, which entailed visiting Malaysia and Brunei. Bavaria was a pleasant final posting for seven years before retirement and the purchase of the house in Uffculme in 1981.

Determined not to be idle in retirement Adrian became involved in voluntary work, first as chairman of a trust to preserve the woollen mill in Uffculme and develop it as 'working museum'. The Devon Emergency Volunteers, membership of the Parish Council and the Local History group also took his time and with his keen interest in all matters naval, he edited the newsletter of the Southwest Maritime Society for twelve years. Devon History Society was indeed very fortunate and honoured to have Adrian Reed, a man of great erudition, ability and presence as Chairman for seven years.

Shirley Purves
Chairman

SAMPFORD PEVERELL SOCIETY – COMING EVENTS 2010

Friday 8 October – Annual General Meeting, Sampford Peverell Village Hall, 7.30pm. A.G.M. followed by guest speaker Tom Coleman on the history of East Devon Farmhouses.

Thursday 18 November – Joint Meeting of our Society and Tiverton Archaeological Society at Sampford Peverell Village Hall, 7.30pm. Guest speaker: Bryn Morris on the subject of the recent Roman finds at Shortlands Lane, Cullompton.

Friday 3 December – General Meeting, Sampford Peverell Village Hall, 7.30pm. Guest speaker: Rob Wilson-North on the Archaeology of Exmoor.

DHS members and affiliated members welcome. For more details, please contact Peter Bowers by email at bowers88@tiscali.co.uk or phone 01884 820256.

Official Society Contacts: www.devonhistorysociety.org.uk

President	Prof. Christopher Holdsworth	01392 438190
Chairman	Shirley Purves shirleypurves@btopenworld.com	01395 232397
Vice Chairman	Philippe Planel planel@tesco.net	01404 46663
Secretary	Margaret Lewis su3681@eclipse.co.uk	01404 42002
Treasurer	Graham Bliss grhmblls@aol.com	01271 870723
Membership Secretary	Gerald Quinn g.quinn256@btinternet.com	01803 607256
Programme Secretary	Jane Bliss jbhistory@hotmail.co.uk	01271 870723
Editor (The Devon Historian)	Dr Andrew Jackson andrew.jackson@bishopq.ac.uk	01522 527347
Editor (Devon History News)	Chris Jago generalcj@hotmail.co.uk	01395 273569
Council Members	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sadru Bhanji • Tony Collings • John Draisey • Todd Gray • Clare Greener • Gill Selley 	