

February 2012
Issue 9



Devon History News



*Image © Royal Albert Memorial Museum and Exeter City Council
The main staircase and statue of Prince Albert*

• NEWSLETTER OF THE DEVON HISTORY SOCIETY •



*Image © Royal Albert Memorial Museum and Exeter City Council
The newly restored exterior of the Royal Albert Memorial Museum. See article on page 4*

From the Editor

Welcome to the latest edition of Devon History News, which once again is packed with news and updates from around the county.

This time our major article is about the newly re-opened Royal Albert Memorial Museum in Exeter. As you will see from the pictures, the refurbishment has been a great success and has restored the building to its former Victorian magnificence. If you haven't yet visited I urge you to do so – you will not be disappointed!

We continue our series of articles from affiliated societies with a piece about the activities of the Alphington Local History Group and the associated Living Here project. Perhaps food for thought for other local groups?

There is also a write-up from Vice Chairman, Phil Planel, on the Book of the Year award and the annual Hoskins Prize. These awards form an important part of the work of the society in encouraging research and high quality publication of works relating to all aspects of Devon's history.

Finally we have our usual updates from society officers and a roundup of news and events likely to be of interest to members.

Ann Bond
Editor, Devon History News

DHS CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

2012 promises to be an interesting year, as you will see from the programme. As a society we are very pleased at the way the list of activities has expanded and from now until November many events are planned. The East/West/ South/ North lectures have proved a success, not only for local historians but also for information to a wider audience and as pleasant social gatherings. Apart from the popular village visits, hosted by local history societies, the first of three annual seminars devoted to the place played by religion in Devon, takes place in May. Bookings are coming in fast for this as you may imagine, so do not delay!

There are several more fliers enclosed with this issue of the Newsletter and I do ask you to look at each one carefully. Most particularly please note the nomination form for the election of new Council members. With the major roles of Chairman, Treasurer, Secretary, Editor and Programme Secretary threatening to become vacant in October, I ask most urgently that you consider whether you could join this happy band. The roles I have mentioned are vital of course but each Council member ensures the continued enjoyment and learning experience, which epitomise the objects of Devon History Society. According to the Constitution, members of our affiliated societies are also eligible for election and can be nominated from the within their society.

I am full of gratitude not only to our hard working Council members but also to all members of the local and affiliated societies who have welcomed us. They have displayed fascinating archives, produced excellent lunches and refreshments and walking the lanes have shared their history with us. 2012 promises to be an eventful year in the history of the United Kingdom and as a minute cog in the wheel I hope the Society continues to flourish and helps create a happy and fulfilling year for you all.

Shirley Purves, Chairman D.H.S.
February 2012

Reminder from the Treasurer

I would like to take this opportunity to remind members that, as agreed at the AGM, subscriptions increase on the 1st May 2012. From that date, subscriptions will be:

| Membership Class | Subscription |
|----------------------|--------------|
| Individual | £15.00 |
| Family | £22.50 |
| Affiliated Societies | £15.00 |
| Corporate Members | £22.50 |
| Life Membership | £150.00 |

A new standing order form is included in this Newsletter. Even if you currently pay by standing order and wish to continue to do so, please complete this form and return it to me. It will cancel your existing standing order to the Society and create a new one. Please send these to me BEFORE May 1st to ensure your standing orders can be set up and the correct subscription is paid in May.

If you do not wish to pay by standing order and wish to pay by cheque instead, please make your cheque payable to 'The Devon History Society' and send it to me.

Both standing order forms and cheques should be sent to me at the following address:

Dr Graham Bliss,
Wavecrest,
Sunnyside Road,
Woolacombe,
Devon,
EX34 7DG

Thank you for your help with these changes.

Graham Bliss
Treasurer

DHS programme of events

Over seventy members of the Devon History Society attended the AGM on 8 October 2011, and speakers on the topic of Devon and War were well received. The final seminar of the year was held at Kingsbridge, where Jeanne James presented a stimulating and enjoyable case study of the medieval chapel at Prawle. It would be good to see members in Barnstaple, North Devon, for the opening seminar of our 2012 programme on Wednesday 7 March, when the Reverend Dr Andrew Jones will speak on Victorian North Devon – antecedents and descendants. Andrew was awarded the W.G. Hoskins prize in the DHS book of the year awards in 2011 for his recent book, *Victorian North Devon, a social history*. There are few scholarly studies of North Devon, and Andrew Jones' book makes a significant contribution to a growing body of work on the history of this part of the county in the Victorian era. The forthcoming seminar will provide an opportunity to share ideas, and to hear about on-going research. A booking form for this event, as well as for the spring meeting in Kenton, the forthcoming conference on The Reformation in Devon, and the seminar at Teignmouth Museum, are included in this newsletter. The June seminar on The Green Lanes of Devon will be followed by a visit to Teignmouth Common, where Valerie Belsey will demonstrate how to recognise ancient hedgerows and see their place in the landscape in relation to present day road systems. Valerie's book on this topic was highly commended in the DHS book of the year awards in 2010. Booking forms for events later in the year will be included in future mailings. In order to cut down on administration costs it would be helpful if booking forms for events could be sent electronically to those members who are willing to receive them via email attachment.

Jane Bliss

Programme Secretary

RAMM - Home to a Million Thoughts

Fully refurbished after a multimillion pound redevelopment, Exeter's Royal Albert Memorial Museum (RAMM) opened to the public in December 2011 and welcomed a staggering 50,000 visits in its first month.

The largest asset in the city's collection is the museum building itself. Built in Venetian Gothic style, the architectural designs were very much informed by John Ruskin's seminal work *The Stones of Venice*. The front elevation is particularly fine, making it one of the city's most distinctive buildings.

This splendid Victorian building has been repaired, refurbished and extended, preparing it for the 21st century. Original architectural features have been revealed allowing visitors to experience the splendour of the original Victorian spaces and an extension includes a suite of modern, flexible exhibition galleries allowing RAMM to bring to the South West prestigious loans and exhibitions from national partners. Modern services have been added to improve the care of visitors and the collections alike.

A new garden entrance links the Victorian museum to its historic surroundings and the neighbouring Rougemont and Northernhay gardens. Exeter is one of only five sites classified by English Heritage as an Area of Archaeological Importance.

The new garden entrance to the museum



Contrasting with the city-centre bustle of the Queen Street entrance, this new entrance offers a leisurely approach to the museum and easy access to the arts centre, library and castle. A new bridge from the entrance leads visitors to the Roman wall and panoramic views of the oldest public open gardens in England and the city.

© Royal Albert Memorial Museum and Exeter City Council

The momentous historical events that have taken place in Exeter over the centuries are reflected in the city's collections: the Roman occupation, King Alfred's defeat of the Danes, the Norman Conquest, King Stephen's siege of the city during the 12th century and the Civil Wars of the 17th century when Exeter was one of the largest and richest cities in England. Its global connections spread to Africa, the Americas, the Far-east and Oceania.

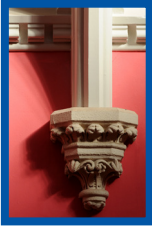
New displays showcase the world-class collections and collectors that have helped RAMM to become one of Britain's finest regional museums. They tell the story of Exeter and Devon from the prehistoric to the present but RAMM is more than a local museum; its internationally important world cultures and natural history collections also tell a story of global exploration and collecting in the 18th and 19th centuries.

The story of Devon's geology starts more than 400 million years ago, appropriately enough with the Devonian period, and finishes with a cascade of flint handaxes marking the entry of mankind. In between, the gallery displays the strengths of RAMM's geology collection and uses an audio-visual presentation to bring dramatic geological events to life.

The largest gallery in the museum consists of two joined spaces. The first begins the story with the fragmentary remains of prehistoric Devon and takes the visitor up to the splendour of Exeter in its 'Golden Age' of the 18th century. The second space starts with 19th-century craft and industry and concludes with a reflection on contemporary Devon and Exeter. Drawing on the archaeology, decorative art, costume and fine art collections, as well as physical and screen-based interactives, it gives a coherent picture of Exeter and Devon through the ages.

As well as its diverse and significant collections, RAMM opened with a lively programme of exhibitions, activities and events ensures that it is the most visited attraction in Exeter and one of the most visited museums in the South West.

Into the Light (15 Dec to 11 March) is an exhibition of French and British painting from Impressionism to the early 1920s. It includes paintings by Monet, Renoir, Stanhope Forbes and Pissarro. The exhibition, *The Road to Rome: Artists and Travellers on the Grand Tour* (15 Dec to 6 May) follows John Rolle Walter's journey through Italy and explores the wider history of the 18th century Grand Tour. An exhibition from the Royal Collection features the extraordinary photographs of *Roger Fenton (1819-69) and Julia Margaret Cameron (1815-79)* (15 Dec to 1 April) two of Britain's most accomplished early photographers.



RAMM is open 10am to 5pm daily except Mondays and bank holidays.
Entry is free.

For more information see www.rammuseum.org.uk/visiting-us

Robert Mackenzie

Marketing Assistant, Royal Albert Memorial Museum

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BOOK REVIEWS FOR THE DEVON HISTORIAN

The following books, which have been received for possible review in the 2012 edition of *The Devon Historian*, have not yet been allocated to a reviewer. If anyone would like to offer to review one of them, (it helps if you have some knowledge of the subject or related topics) please contact me by email or post at the address on the back page of this newsletter.

Barrett, Roger. *Prawle Point and the coast between Start Point and Salcombe Bar: an illustrated history*. National Coastwatch Institution, Prawle Point, 2011. 96 p. ISBN: 9780956885401. £5.99.

Greeves, Tom & Newman, Phil. *The Great Courts of Devon tinnerns, 1510 and 1710*. Dartmoor Tinworking Research Group, 2011. 57 p. ISBN: 978952944218. £5.95.

Jones, Andrew. *Victorian North Devon: a social history*. Andrew Jones, 2010. 529 p. No ISBN. £15.00.

Smith, Rosemary & Walshaw, Harland. *The houses of Lympstone*. Lympstone Historic Houses Group, 2011. 104 p. ISBN: 9780956983701. £8.50.

Ternstrom, Myrtle. *Lords of Lundy*. M.S. Ternstrom, 2010. 235 p. ISBN: 0950617792. £12.99.

Mitzi Auchterlonie
Reviews Editor

Devon History Society Book of the Year awards

At our AGM and annual award ceremony held in Exeter on Saturday, 8 October 2011, the Devon History Society presented the annual History Book of the Year award to Dr Todd Gray for his book *Lest Devon Forgets*.

In presenting the award, Chairman Shirley Purves told how its author had visited every corner of the county in search of the stories behind one of most significant landscape features of any community. The book recounts the local politics and rivalries involved in the creation of Devon's World War 1 War Memorials and the reasons why different communities chose different forms of memorial such crosses, obelisks or village halls.



Society President Professor Christopher Holdsworth with Dr Todd Gray, winner of the Book of the Year award.

Mrs Purves continued: “But this book is not just a catalogue of the memorials themselves. It has been extensively researched and has drawn on a wide range of primary sources, to understand the different forms of commemoration. The roles and expectations of the local aristocracy and gentry; working people; the church and local clergy; and politicians, as well as the bereaved and the returning service personnel are all included. It has been written in the author’s usual style making it accessible to the general reader as well as to the serious historian.”

Accepting the award, Todd Gray said: ‘The award is a great honour and has to be seen alongside the continuing adding of soldiers’ names to Devon’s Great War Memorials. These monuments were erected ninety years ago but they continue to be as relevant to society as they were then. And each and every one of Devon’s memorials is unique and illustrates the character of the place it was erected.’

The second major award, The Hoskins Prize went to Andrew Jones for *Victorian North Devon: a social history*. The Hoskins prize is awarded in memory of the late Professor WG Hoskins, Devon’s foremost local historian and founder and first president of the Devon History Society, which is generously supported by Prof. Hoskins daughter, Susan Hewitt. It is awarded for a significant contribution to the study of local history by a local history society or an amateur historian.

Andrew Jones is vicar of Rose Ash near South Molton and his book makes an important addition to a growing body of work on the history of north Devon in the Victorian era. The book reveals what life was like for the ordinary villager in this part of the county in the Victorian era through a detailed examination of everyday life in the parish of Rose Ash.

Two other awards were made for books which were highly commended by the judging panel. One went to the late Carol Trewin for her book *The Devon Food Book*. Although not primarily a book of history this superbly illustrated volume includes sections on the history of farming, fishing and food production, linking together the evolution and interdependence of food production and landscape. It captivated the judging panel sufficiently to want to award a commendation for its contribution to what is a significant aspect of Devon’s heritage. Sadly, Ms Trewin, who was a well - respected writer on food and farming, died shortly after completing this volume.

The final award was for Jeremy Butler who compiled and edited Peter Orlando Hutchinson’s *Travels in Victorian Devon*. The first volume of this beautifully illustrated set was published in 2000, the second volume in the autumn of 2010, resulting in both researchers and the general reader now being able to indulge themselves in discovering the landscapes of Victorian Devon.

Philippe Planel
Vice Chairman

More news from the Plymouth and West Devon Record Office

We reported in the August 2011 edition of Devon History News that plans were being developed which would see a new Plymouth History Centre developed on the Parkside Community College site in the Devonport part of Plymouth. Shortly after publication a major rethink took place when Plymouth City Council took over parts of the historic Royal William Yard from the South West Regional Development Agency. Plans are now being made to create the history centre in the Factory Cooperage building in the yard. As well as the Plymouth and West Devon Record Office, the Museum and Art Gallery stores and the South West Film and Television Archives may move to the Stonehouse building creating a new 'cultural hub' in the heart of one of the most historic sites in the city. The City Council believes that the Royal William Yard is a much better option for this kind of development as it's a more natural cultural fit and the huge space within the Factory Cooperage lends itself perfectly for use as a cultural hub which could potentially attract other partners.

The Royal William Victualling Yard, in Stonehouse, was the major victualling depot of the Royal Navy. Built between 1826 and 1835 it was designed by the architect Sir John Rennie and was named after William IV. The Cooperage building originally accommodated 100 coopers to make the barrels and kegs in which biscuits, salt, meat, beer, spirits, fresh water could be stored and transported. Progress will be dependent on securing external support in the form of a capital grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund and other funds.

Louisa Mann
City Archivist

North Devon Athenaeum

It seems to have slipped quietly under the radar, but The North Devon Athenaeum at Barnstaple has placed a searchable catalogue of their holdings on line: via - www.northdevonathenaeum.org.uk

Divided into three sections; Documents, Library, Newspapers & Images. On 7th Dec 2011 at their founder's day they have launched a section which contains around 6000 images from the North Devon Journal for years around the 1950s. They also have launched a research service for materials they hold and also within the Studies Library.

This is a comprehensive collection of materials and more will be placed on line as time/money permit.

Affiliated Society Corner

Our report this time is provided by Rowena Kirkpatrick of the Alphington Local History Group and the Living Here project. If your society would like to contribute a short article about any aspect of your work in a future edition of Devon History News, please contact the editor.

ALPHINGTON LOCAL HISTORY GROUP

Although set up only in 2008 the Alphington Local History Group has already achieved a great deal.

Our collection of old Alphington pictures numbers well over 400. Where necessary we are dating them and finding and recording the names of villagers who appear in some of the photographs. We also collect and preserve old documents, parish magazines and gather and record memories of old Alphington.

At our general meetings we have speakers from time to time or take historic walks around the Parish.

Publications to date are: a booklet about Alphington's War Dead, a general history of the whole Parish and a booklet about an old terrace of workman's cottages. On-going projects are a history of Alphington Church, transcription of old deeds and in-depth research into all of Alphington's old buildings and their past residents.

Each year we display all the new finds at an exhibition open to all, judging by the high attendance there is great interest in Alphington's history. On Saturday 7th June 2008 we held a special exhibition to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the last passenger train running through the village on the Teign Valley Railway Line on Saturday 7th June 1958 and the closure of Alphington Halt on 9th June 1958. This was followed by an evening walk tracing the route of the old line in Alphington. We finished at the location of the old Alphington Halt. As the minutes ticked by until the exact time when the steam train departed for Exeter St. David's for the last time 50 years ago we all stood in complete silence. Ah, the nostalgia of times gone by but not forgotten!

THE ROYAL ALBERT MEMORIAL MUSEUM AND THE LIVING HERE PROJECT

At the time of the closure of The Royal Albert Memorial Museum for renovations in 2007 they developed a web site Living Here at www.livinghere.org.uk

Over the last four years the communities from Alphington, St Thomas, Exwick and Cowick have uploaded a wealth of articles and photographs illustrating life from both the past and present.

The project has helped with several publications; these include a large leaflet illustrating an historical trail around St Thomas and my own historical book about Alphington Parish.

The comments feature on the site has brought in messages from far and wide.

For me the most memorable event to be held through the Living Here project was the Alphington Old Residents Re-union Day. Extensive advertising brought several hundred past and present village residents together once more in the old school at Alphington. Refreshments were enjoyed and old Alphington pictures admired while everyone reminisced about the good old days and caught up with up-to-date news. The two things that will always stay with me were two visitors saying, 'I did not intend to stay this long but I have met so many old friends' and 'I have just met someone I have not seen for 50 years!'

Rowena Kirkpatrick
Secretary – Alphington Local History Group

Community Editor – Living Here
rowena57jay@yahoo.co.uk
(01392) 216251

The screenshot shows a web browser window displaying the 'Living Here' website. The page title is 'Searching for Alphington!'. The main content area features a post by Rowena Jay, updated on 29th October 2007. The post discusses her research into the founding of Alphington in the late 1700s, mentioning a founding foundling named Thomas Alphington. She also mentions finding records for James Alphington (aged 23) and Sarah Alphington (aged 0) in the 1871 Census Returns. A sidebar on the left contains navigation links such as 'Introduction', 'Neighbourhoods', and 'Log in'. A sidebar on the right lists 'More about...' Alphington, including links to 'The Alphington ponies', 'Red shoes', and 'Work skills in Bakers Yard, Alphington'. The page also includes a search bar at the top right and a 'Log in' form on the left.

Coming events

DEVON RECORD OFFICE OPEN DAY

On Saturday 17th March, between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m., Devon Heritage Services, in association with the Friends of Devon's Archives, will be hosting an Open Day at the Devon Record Office, Great Moor House. The day is designed to launch the restructured service and also to commemorate the Diamond Jubilee of the Devon Record Office, which was founded in March 1952.

Representatives of many of the county's local history and other societies will be in attendance, including the Devon History Society, the Devonshire Association, the Devon Family History Society, and the Devon Gardens Trust, in addition to staff from the Plymouth and West Devon Record Office and the North Devon Record Office.

Members of the Devon Family History Society will be available to offer advice on family history research, and the Devon Record Office enquiry desk will be fully staffed throughout the day.

There will also be guided tours of the different sections of the record office, including several of the strongrooms, where documents will be on display. Visitors will also have the opportunity to visit the Conservation Studio and receive advice on the preservation of documents which they can bring with them on the day.

There will also be a number of talks on subjects of interest, and food and drink will be on sale throughout the day.

It is not necessary to book and there is no charge for attending.

PETER ORLANDO HUTCHINSON PROJECT CONFERENCE

The 2012 edition of the In the footsteps of Peter Orlando Hutchinson Project Conference will be on Saturday 14 April at the Norman Lockyer Observatory (Sidmouth). The cost will be held at last year's sum of £10.00, which includes lunch. Speakers include: Tom Cadbury (RAMM Exeter), "POH and the Royal Albert Memorial Museum - a continuing presence"; Rob Wilson-North (Exmoor National Park), "The changed face of Exmoor - from Romanticism to Inclosure; Barbara Farquharson and John Torrance (Branscombe Project), "POH in Branscombe".

The full programme can be obtained and bookings made from 01404 46663 or phil.planel@eastdevonaonb.org.uk.

Official Society Contacts: www.devonhistorysociety.org.uk

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