

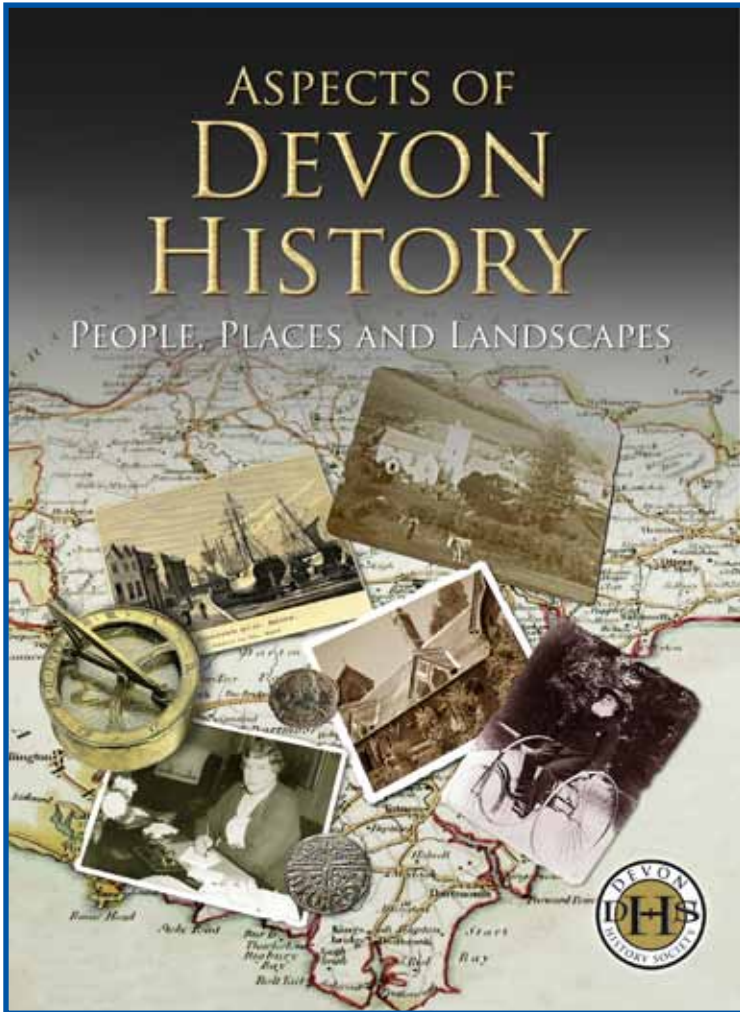
August 2012

Issue 10

Devon History News



• NEWSLETTER OF THE DEVON HISTORY SOCIETY •



Editor

In this edition we carry reports from three different groups, each of which shows diverse ways that local historians can engage with their local communities. Groups from Branscombe and Woodbury have shared their experiences of village and parish based research, whilst Age Concern Okehampton and Torridge have written about how they have been able to use Tithe Apportionment transcription to further their IT skills project.

We also have a piece from one of our members about plans to celebrate the centenary of the Women's Suffrage Pilgrimage of 1913. This looks like a interesting and unusual project so do let Dr Neville know if you are able to help her and the project team.

Although it is still only August, it is time to start thinking about booking your places for our autumn events. Enclosed with this newsletter are details and booking forms for the AGM in October and seminars being held during September and November. We look forward to seeing you at these events.

I hope you enjoy reading this newsletter.

Ann Bond

Editor, Devon History News

DHS Chairman's Report

It has been busy year for all Council members and I am so grateful to one and all for their enormous support. The programme has taken us on two successful days in the county, Kenton and Crediton, and we held a very successful seminar on the Reformation to which we enticed speakers of national fame in May. Crediton was once again the venue. The good news is that two logical extensions to this are scheduled for 2013 and 2014. Our half day seminars, North South East and West have continued and are much appreciated and enjoyed.

You have read the obituary of Professor Youings, who died some months ago. As a founder member of the Devon History Society she remembered us to the last. The Society has received a legacy from her will of £2,000 for which we are extremely grateful. At the moment it is 'ring fenced' until a decision is made on future projects which will remind us of her far seeing generosity. Producing the Devon Anniversary Book is expensive and it helps immensely to know we have a cushion of money in reserve before the expected revenue from book sales comes in after the book launch on November 2nd 2012.

We have been involved in putting pressure on Devon Records Office to safeguard the West County Studies Library collection. This has enabled us to go ahead with the awards of the Devon Book of the Year and the Hoskins prize. At one time it was feared they

could not take place during their re-organisation and we are grateful to the librarians for their helpful co-operation in finding the Devon 2011 publications.

Four more members have come forward to join the Council. At the AGM in October you will be asked to elect them. Several existing Council members who are changing roles will ask the assembly to ratify them.

In these rather depressing days nationally and internationally (and I am not even referring to this recent summer weather) it is heartening to say that we are confident in the buoyancy and health of the Devon History Society... long may it flourish! I have enjoyed enormously being Chairman but the time has come for a new leader to progress steadily.

With best wishes to everyone

Shirley Purves, DHS Chairman
July 2012

Reminder from the Treasurer

My thanks to all of you who have sent your subscriptions so promptly, either by standing order or by cheque. However, there are a few of you who do not seem to have changed standing orders.

In other words I have received £10 rather than the correct subs for 2012/13 of £15. There are also a number of cases where it seems the bank has quite simply not carried out instructions properly (no great surprise there). I will be contacting those affected within a few weeks.

For those members who have not yet paid their subscriptions for 2012/13, I would very much appreciate receiving these as soon as possible. As a reminder: Individual subscription is £15; for a family it is £22.50.

Please send cheques to:

Dr Graham Bliss
Wave Crest
Sunnyside Road
Woolacombe
EX34 7DG.

Thank you in advance

Gram Bliss
Treasurer

DHS Programme of Events

The opening seminar of our 2012 programme was held in March at the North Devon Record Office, Barnstaple, when the Reverend Dr Andrew Jones spoke on Victorian North Devon – antecedents and descendants. Andrew talked about his recent book, *Victorian North Devon: a social history*, which was awarded the Hoskins prize in the DHS book of the year awards in 2011. He also drew attention to topics which he identified as under researched, as well as discussing archive collections. He urged local historians to practise what he called ‘head up history’, and to place local research in a wider context. The stimulating talk led to a lively discussion and questions. The spring meeting in April was hosted by the Kenton Past and Present Society, and attended by eighty people. There were three excellent talks, followed by guided tours of the church and the village, where we saw examples of the Victorian rebuilding outlined by Ann Bond in her interesting talk. The delicious lunch and afternoon tea provided by the Kenton and Powderham Women’s Institute was an added bonus! The Reformation in Devon conference held at the Boniface Centre in Crediton, in May, was a great success. We were fortunate to have such eminent and interesting speakers as Professor Alexandra Walsham, Dr Liz Tingle and Mr John Allan. We were sorry that Professor Nicholas Orme was unable to speak due to illness, but his paper was very well read by Mrs Jeanne James. The June seminar on *The Green Lanes of Devon* was held at Teignmouth Museum. We received a very warm welcome at the museum, which has recently been upgraded, and is well worth visiting. Valerie Belsey’s talk on the Green Lanes of Devon generated much interest, and was followed by a walk to demonstrate how to recognise ancient hedgerows. The green lane was very muddy, but everyone enjoyed the day which ended with a convivial lunch! We returned to Crediton for the summer meeting hosted by Crediton Area History and Museum Society. John Heal’s fascinating talk on the eighteenth-century map of Crediton (housed at Devon Record office) generated many questions, and Penny Little’s informative talk on ‘Crediton Through the Ages: Reflections in its Parish Church’ was much appreciated. A lovely lunch and tea, and a guided tour of the town and the museum rounded off an excellent day, when for once this summer the sun shone! There are several more events this year; details and booking forms are included with the newsletter, do come along!

Jane Bliss,
Hon. Programme Secretary.

History and Community - The Branscombe Project

The Branscombe Project has been going for nearly nineteen years. Its motto is ‘Where Memory Meets History’ and we have found that this is a fertile cross-over ground that fosters a great deal of engagement within the community.

In the first instance it seemed important to record people’s memories. The number of people who have lived their entire lives in the village was dwindling and they were getting older. Moreover, living mainly in ex-council houses within a very pretty

and sought-after village they were often somewhat marginalised. Rather than simply interviewing people, we convened a meeting and asked what topics would interest them. As a result, we taped or videoed more than a hundred interviews on topics as diverse as 'Ghosts', 'Shops, Trades & Getting By', 'Lace-making', 'Farming', 'Cliff-Plats', 'Outdoor Loos', 'the Churchyard', 'Smuggling', 'Blackshirts', 'School', 'the Wreck of the Napoli', and 'World War II'.

We have set up a large, informal, committee (about twenty members, many of whom are essential contributors to our activities). They represent a good cross-section of the community.

It seemed important that people should see the fruits of their labour and so, each year, we put on an exhibition. This often takes us into archival work and permits us to gather in photos, letters, maps which can be scanned and added to the archive. These exhibitions are very well attended and often involve a drama-documentary or play, tea party or concert. We also put on winter talks, some on local topics, others more broad ranging.

We have written and published several booklets and have also, more recently, set up a very interactive website www.branscombeproject.org.uk. Many of the people that contact us via the website are researching family histories and we have found ourselves acting as a post box. The ways in which families disperse have also made us think about how, when and why people left the parish, where they went, and what happened to them.

The publicity and enthusiasm that the exhibitions and website have generated have meant that people have come forward with important new materials – Blackshirt newspapers hidden under floor-boards, trunk-loads of letters and photographs found in a loft ...

It was always intended that the Project should extend far beyond the landscapes of living memory. The idea was to explore changing landscapes, changing lives. Thus we have undertaken parish walks in search of 'Disappeared Houses', surveyed and excavated, created a postcard archive, and, with the help of the Parish Council, an extensive photographic archive. The Devon Record Office has presented our website with a detailed estate map of the parish in 1793, and working with the East Devon AONB (the 'Parishscapes Project' and 'Peter Orlando Hutchinson Project') we now have access to digitised tithe maps and to transcriptions of the Peter Orlando Hutchinson diaries. Historical research by members of the Project has taken the parish story back to prehistoric and medieval times, explored the changing history of the A3052 road, discovered 'bread riots' in the early nineteenth century, and effigy burning in the middle/late nineteenth century. We have investigated a nineteenth century 'murder' and discovered that something that occurred nearly one hundred and fifty years ago may still reverberate within the community.

We believe that at a time of economic and social stress, when communities are tending to become less cohesive and where there are fewer outlets and places for people to

come together, our work – this engagement with recent and more distant past, with community and landscape, and with the larger world beyond - brings people together, gives them a stake in the place they live in, and creates new linkages and a sense of belonging within the community.

Barbara Farquharson,
The Branscombe Project

Can You Help?



Where was this photo taken? Who are the people in it?

A local group is planning to celebrate the 100th anniversary next year (2013) of the national Women's Suffrage Pilgrimage organised by the National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies and are looking for the help of local historians. The aim is to create a theatre piece to be performed in places where the suffrage pilgrims stopped, and to develop school and community projects to be shown alongside the drama.

The movement for women's suffrage is often associated with the Pankhursts and the Women's Social and Political Union (WSPU) with its trademark colours of purple, white and green. Numerically stronger, however, was the membership of the National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies (NUWSS), with colours of red, white and green. The NUWSS had firmly decided not to become involved the kind of violent head-line

catching action which the WSPU had decided to take, and in 1913 resolved instead to undertake the 'suffrage pilgrimage' as a form of peaceful protest. They wanted to draw attention to the widespread support that the cause of votes for women attracted. Eight contingents from across the country were organised to march to Hyde Park where they converged for a major national rally. Along the way each of the contingents held their own local rallies and meetings, often arranged by local groups who would join them to march along a section of the route.

One of the eight contingents was led by a group of women who set off on 19 June 1913 from Land's End. A week later, after making their way through Cornwall, the group crossed over into Devon. We know that their journey in Devon took them through Devonport, Plymouth, Plympton, Ivybridge, Totnes, Newton Abbot, Bishopsteignton, Teignmouth, Dawlish, Exmouth, Lypstone, Exton, Topsham, Exeter, Silverton, Bickleigh, and Tiverton before they passed on into Somerset on 7 July. Do any DHS members from these local places know of any local records of their meetings, or have information about the way the local societies entertained them?

Amongst the women who took part was Mrs Annie Ramsay, the elderly mother of one of Plymouth's earliest women doctors and leading suffragist, Dr Mabel Ramsay. Annie, bottle of sal volatile in her bag, stayed the course for the entire pilgrimage, part walking, part travelling on the van that accompanied the pilgrims, and ended up speaking to the rally in Hyde Park. Among other Devon women reported by the newspapers as supporting the different stages of the pilgrimage were Mrs M.P. Willcocks of Exeter, Mrs Knight Bruce, president of Newton Abbot's NUWSS, Miss Joan Retallack, Miss Mattinson and the Misses Hester and Constance Frood, who met the pilgrims at Exmouth, and Mrs Fletcher, secretary of the Exeter society.

Do you know anything about these women, or about other Devon supporters of suffrage in 1913? We would be interested in any information that can help us build up a picture of activity in Devon. Would you be interested in becoming involved in the plans to commemorate the march next year? If so, please get in touch with the planning group for Dreadnought South West via my email address or phone number (shown below).

Julia Neville, Devon History Society member
j.f.neville@btinternet.com, or on 01392-461157



Tithe Project

History for all?

Historical research has often been the privilege of the well educated and affluent, but the recent Devon Record Office Tithe Map Transcription Project may have broken some new ground in co-ordinating work undertaken locally by a wide spectrum of individuals, amenity groups and societies in around 400 Devon parishes. Barrie Duke, Chief Officer, Age Concern Okehampton and Torridge, recently sent out the following press release:

“Age Concern Okehampton and Torridge is calling for volunteers to assist with Devon County Council’s Tithe Map and Apportionment Digitisation project.

This is an opportunity for volunteers to join the New Clicks programme, funded by the Okehampton United Charities, to help transcribe details from written records that document the ownership, occupiers and areas of all tithe land in the parish of Inwardleigh.

The tithe was an annual payment, approximating to one tenth of the produce of the land, to the parish for the maintenance of the church and the clergy. In 1836 the government made a change from the payment of tithes in kind to payments in money. In the following years maps for all of the country were drawn up and detailed records made.”

Anyone, of any age, who has very basic skills can join the group and help in this local history project. This is also an opportunity for helpers to learn the basics of spreadsheets as simple training will be given.

Barrie takes up the story:

“We decided to base our free training on people’s interests and hobbies and help them to remain living in sparsely populated rural areas. We have cut their travel costs, allowed them far greater purchasing power and created free communication links with their friends and relatives around the world.

Many users start with buying a laptop, then, realising that they are not self-explanatory without support, they come to the centre to learn the basics of emailing and browsing the Internet. We assist with the purchase of new and used computers and give help in acquiring and setting up broadband at home. I discovered the Tithe project on the DCC website whilst looking for statistics on older people in Devon.

In evaluating our existing IT project in 2011 it became clear that we could create a venture that encouraged the use of spreadsheets whilst building a sense of volunteering and putting something back into the community. Our existing drop-

in sessions encourage mutual support and make learning a more enjoyable and fun activity.

We were awarded a grant by the Okehampton United Charities last year that helped us to appoint a funded IT engineer and trainer, Ben Cook, who works alongside our volunteer trainers.

We look for people who have an interest in local history, need a reason to come out of the house and can practice conversation as well as keep their minds active. Take up was slow to start with, but some new volunteers have started work since the start of the project. Once bitten, however, participants find that the work becomes addictive. It is early days but where the spelling or meaning of words is not known recourse to a web browser can be made which builds a confidence in searching for information on the Internet. Some are able to share their local knowledge.

Participants have been overheard saying how they value coming to the centre and meeting other people, gaining a confidence in using computers and how much they value the structure that can be brought to the life of an older person living on their own. Our aim is to widen the scope of our project into other market towns and villages. Our work with the Tithe project is open to anyone, especially unemployed, disabled and older people and we hope that this could be a way of learning about the people who lived and worked in Inwardleigh over 100 years ago.”

All enquiries should be made to 2 Crediton Road, Okehampton, between 9.30 am and 1 pm on weekdays, or by ringing 01837 55838. Requests for more information can be made by email, at acot@btinternet.com, or by using the enquiry form on www.acot.org.uk.

DHS Fortieth Anniversary Book

Steady progress is being made with the anniversary volume, which has now been typeset, and will be printed following final proofing and completion of the index. We are very pleased with the excellent book cover, designed by Delphine Jones, which is featured on the front cover of the newsletter. The book launch will be held at the Boniface Centre, Crediton, on Friday 2 November for authors and invited guests. Books can be ordered at the pre-publication price of £15, until the offer closes on 15 October 2012. Following publication the book will be available direct from Stevensbooks, (www.stevensbooks.co.uk) at the retail price of £18. Pre-ordered books can either be posted, or collected at the book launch. An order form is included with the newsletter.

Woodbury Local History Society

A small group of members of the Society is engaged at present on researching the orchards of the parish making use of maps and surveys dating from 1796. We are also looking at wills, inventories, deeds and property sales which indicate that cider was made on various farms. We are not only using documents but also walking around the whole parish, taking with us copies of various areas of the tithe map and 1903 OS map, to see how many orchards are still in use, and what happens to the apples grown in them. We have one farm in the parish which is still actively making cider, on a small scale, in the traditional way.

Another project that we hope soon to put in hand is to trace the history of all sport in Woodbury from the nineteenth century to the present day. The results of this project will be published in a small booklet.

One of our members, Roger Stokes, has digitized the tithe map (one of the largest in Devon) and created 250 layers of information. He can produce the crops and orchards of the parish and individual farms, as well as land held by the major landowners. Roger also holds a collection on his computer of over 3000 images from photographs, postcards and portraits of people and places within the parish.

A wonderful survey of the hedgerow trees of the parish, fully illustrated, mapped, measured and analysed has been completed by two members of the society and is contained in three large files. This survey can also be seen on the internet on the Woodbury website at www.woodburydevon.co.uk

The Society has a Reference Library and Archive Room within the Village Hall. This is open to all members of the parish to consult by arrangement with the Committee. This library consists of a growing number of books on the history of a variety of aspects of places and subjects in Devon, original documents, pamphlets, records of several parish societies (dating from the 1920s), a collection of maps of Woodbury and the surrounding areas, photographs, newspaper cuttings, photocopies of documents, twenty oral history tapes, as well as collections of papers of Woodbury people which have been given to the society.

We have a variety of talks, many of them by local people, which are not heard by other history groups. Recently a farming family, which has been in Woodbury for nearly 250 years, gave a talk on the changes over the years on Rydon Farm and reminisced over their farming lives during the last 80 years. This meeting was enthusiastically attended by 90 people, which was an indication of what appeals to many people in a local history society.

We are hoping to forge a link with another small parish which includes the hamlet of Ebford, which was taken away from Woodbury parish in 1989. All the history of Ebford is part of Woodbury's history, and its people were married, baptised and buried in Woodbury Village, so it would be nice to bring them back into the fold.

Our society was founded in 1994 with five members, and has year by year increased. So far this year we have 60 members, which, if the same pattern is followed, will increase over the year.

Gill Selley

Woodbury Local History Society

Book Reviews

I'd like to remind anyone who said they would review a book for the Devon Historian to submit it as soon as possible. One further book has been received for review. If you would be interested in offering to review this please contact me by email or by post.

Robert Furse: A Devon Family Memoir of 1593, edited by Anita Travers, Devon & Cornwall Record Society, 2012.

This is Furse's advice book and family record, written for his only son when he knew he was near to death.

Please also note my new address and telephone number, which are on the contacts page on the back cover.

Mitzi Auchterlonie

Reviews Editor

Affiliated Societies

If your history society is looking for an interesting walk/excursion, the East Devon AONB is taking group bookings for Bronze Age walks through the ritual landscape of Farway Common and Broad Down.

Some of the sites first recorded by the Sidmouth Antiquary, Peter Orlando Hutchinson, have been cleared by volunteers and professional contractors, working with the Forestry Commission, private landowners and English Heritage. Some of the artefacts from the Farway Broad Down complex are now displayed in the RAM Museum, Exeter.

The walk is over rough ground but presents no particular difficulties and covers about 2km. The Hare and Hounds public house is conveniently close. Ring the East Devon AONB on 01404 46663 for further details. No charge is made for this event.

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www.devonhistorysociety.org.uk

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