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Issue 12

Devon History News



• NEWSLETTER OF THE DEVON HISTORY SOCIETY •



Dawlish Warren, following storms in 1946
Courtesy of the Environment Agency
Living with a Changing Coast Project. (See article on page 8)

Editor

Welcome to the August issue of Devon History News. In this edition we have reports about research projects currently being undertaken in Bovey Tracey and Willand, which together with similar features seen in previous editions of Devon History News highlight the diversity and dynamism of local history across the county. We also have two requests for assistance, one in relation to a Totnes Rent Roll and the other from the Living with a Changing Coast project. Do get in touch if you are able to help with either of these. We also have an article from Journal editor, Jane Bliss about websites for local historians, and our usual range of updates.

Enclosed you will also find details of the AGM in October and booking forms for the remainder of this year's events, including an exciting new development for us in the form of a day long skills seminar to be held in Plymouth in conjunction with the Plymouth and West Devon Record Office and the Plymouth Library Service. We expect this to be a very popular event, so if you would like to attend do book early. If the event is a success, we intend to hold similar events in the future in other parts of the county.

Finally a personal note. As some of you will be aware, I have offered to take over from Graham Bliss as society treasurer and so this is the final edition of Devon History News which I will edit and I will stand down as editor at the AGM in October. Issue 13 of Devon History News is due out in February 2014. If you think you might be interested in becoming its editor, please contact me. My details are on the back cover.

Ann Bond
Editor, Devon History News

Chairman's Report

The DHS events of the last few months reflect a familiar pattern: a spring meeting hosted by the Ottery St Mary Heritage Society, the 2nd Conference on Religion in Devon at Buckfast Abbey and a summer meeting at Poltimore House. These events do the DHS great credit and are a pleasure to attend.

Beyond these events, there has been a growing feeling on the DHS Council that the current high level of interest in local history in Devon demands more of us – in short that we 'do' more history and encourage more people to do it. This feeling was recently concretised in the course of a half-day session involving the council, ably led by Graham Bliss, on the future vision of the DHS and the goals and strategies the society might wish to pursue. As a result we now have a clearer idea of what we wish to achieve, which should raise the profile of the society and improve its visibility. It was high time we reflected on such matters.

Membership of the DHS has for some years been static and the society has not been large enough or had the capacity to manage projects, or apply for the funding currently available through such bodies as the Heritage Lottery Fund. Of course the DHS should and will still regularly ask individual members and affiliated societies what they wish us to do, but we should also be prepared to take the lead. In fact some new initiatives were already in the pipeline before we acquired the 'vision thing': the next issue of the Devon Historian will, for the first time, be a peer-reviewed publication; the emphasis on skilling seminars will be reinforced, offering training in oral history for example; the website (already excellent) will be further developed; membership details are now on a spread sheet so that our new membership secretary, Judy Moss, and our new treasurer, Ann Bond, can communicate more effectively. Finally, now that we know a bit more about where we are going we hope to recruit individuals to the few remaining places on the council with the additional skills we need to help expand both our membership and the scope of our activities.

Phillippe Planel, Chairman

Obituaries

David L B Thomas

David Thomas, who died in March 2013, was a long serving secretary to the Devon History Society, and was already Secretary when I became Chairman. He was an enormous help to me at that time, supporting and guiding as I got to grips with the responsibilities I had assumed. He remained an active member until a few years ago when his declining health precluded him from serving to the exacting standards he set himself. He remained interested to the end of his life.

After a spell in the army he became a civil engineer, specialising in highways, but his abiding love was for the repair and restoration of bridges, the older the better. He and his wife Mary spent all their holidays in the UK and abroad in places where he could spend time on, under, around, photographing and making notes on bridges, from ancient Roman to very modern such as the Calatrava Bridge in Valencia.

He enjoyed meeting like-minded people in the DHS who loved buildings, beautiful churches and history and learned a great deal about Devon heritage and history on some of the excellent trips organised by Elizabeth Maycock or Helen Harris.

He wrote many papers and contributions to Notes and Queries, The Devon Historian and the Transactions of the Devonshire Association about bridges and their rivers and gave dozens of illustrated talks in towns and villages. He also wrote

a book about bridges over the rivers Otter, Lemon, Teign, Dart and Exe. His book, Devon Bridges, as yet remains unpublished. David's entire collection of bridge files and books have been left to the Devon Record Office.

Shirley Purves, Past Chairman

Professor Malcolm Todd

We were also saddened to hear of the death of our immediate past President, Professor Malcolm Todd, who passed away on 6 June 2013 and was President from 2006 to 2009. An appreciation of his work with the Devon History Society will be included in the next edition of Devon History News.

Dreadnought South West

Readers may remember our appeal in Devon History News last August for information and help for Dreadnought South West, who were planning a commemoration of the 1913 National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies Great Pilgrimage from Land's End to Hyde Park. Some of our members and affiliated societies took up the challenge and shared their information, the souvenirs they had inherited, or hosted and joined in waymarker events for the touring production of 'Oxygen', the play written by Natalie McGrath to commemorate the pilgrimage. Congratulations to those who did, and to Dreadnought South West, for the way they brought to life the aspirations of our suffragist ancestors.

Affiliated Societies

Getting to know our affiliated societies over the past six months has been a great pleasure. So much going on, so many people involved. If, like me, your own work and interest are rooted in one local community, it's sometimes difficult to imagine all that's going on across all the local history societies in Devon.

I am keen that we use our collective membership to best effect, and with that in mind I have started to build a list of people who've spoken at local history societies over recent years. This was suggested by a number of local societies as something that programme secretaries in particular would appreciate. I hope to get more names from local societies, though the list already runs to six pages. If you are reading this as an individual member and want to suggest a talk that you could give, please get in touch with me at j.f.neville@btinternet.com.

Another opportunity for showing the richness of working together on research topics might be to share our researches on the impact of the First World War on

our different local communities. We hope to create the opportunity during 2014, perhaps at our AGM, for societies to bring and share some of the work we know they will have done, either as part of the county's 'Devon Remembers' project, or independently. If your society has or will have something to share, please get in touch with me. (Again, if you are an individual reading this and are doing some research you think would add to the picture of Devon in the First World War, let me know.)

Julia Neville

2013 Programme so far



The programme for 2013 has been both varied and stimulating. It began on March 22nd in Exeter with archaeologist John Smith giving us a dynamic and innovative view of the activities of the Roman army in Britain as seen through its military and other equipment. This was followed by the Spring Meeting hosted by the Ottery St Mary Heritage Society at the Tumbling Weir Hotel on April 20th, where around 40

members enjoyed lectures by Betty Williams on "Thackeray and Larkbeare"; by Richard Coley on "The history of Ottery's Parish Church"; and Chris Wakefield on "Landscape and History", which looked at changing land use and landscape within the parish boundary of Ottery from Domesday onwards.

The second Religion in Devon conference focussed on Victorian Devon and was held at the Buckfast Abbey Conference Centre on May 18th. Professor John Wolffe of the Open University and Dr Andrew Jones took us through the famous Gorham-Philpotts controversy which not only made Brampton Speke famous, but involved both the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Privy Council. Other papers covered the tractarian influence on Devon church architecture by Richard Parker and the changing place of the organ in Devon churches by Dr Nigel Browne. Around a dozen members of the Society visited St. Peter Ad Vincula Church in Combe Martin on Thursday June 20th. The newly restored late mediaeval/Tudor rood screen was most impressive and well worth the visit. The first half of the 2013 programme concluded with the Summer meeting on July 13th at Poltimore House, Exeter, hosted by the Poltimore House Trust.

Paul Auchterlonie,
Programme Secretary

Portrait of A Parish - Parkham 1841/2. (www.genuki.org.uk)

Members may be interested in the above article which appears on the GENUKI (Devon) website in the Parkham (history) section. This is a revised and extended version of a paper which appeared in Aspects of Devon History (2012) under the title, Anatomy of a Parish - Parkham 1841/2. The Portrait contains tables and transcriptions which could not appear in the original paper because of inevitable restrictions on space. A transcription of the Parkham tithe apportionment is included.

Willand History Group

Research Project on the Cloth Trade in the Culm Valley

Willand History Group is now involved with a major project on the history of the cloth trade in Cullompton and the Culm Valley. The principal sponsor of this is the Cullompton Town Team which is working in partnership with the Cullompton History Group, The Cullompton Walronds Preservation Trust, the local library and community centre, Coldharbour Mill and local schools. The project aims to improve the knowledge and understanding of Cullompton's significant role in cloth trade history. There will also be work across a wider area, however, involving not just Willand, but the Coldharbour Mill at Uffculme and the cloth trade routes down to the port at Topsham from which the cloth was exported. Bradninch History Group and Exe Valley U3A are also involved. James Morrison, Willand Local History Group's secretary, is excited about the chance it offers their members to explore more about Willand's clothiers, fullers, weavers, woolcombers, and mill workers, to understand where they lived, what their work involved, their daily living standards and how they fitted in with the broader processes of the cloth trade.' As James pointed out in the Willand parish magazine, they 'know various snippets of information', such as that Henry Oland, a local clothier, has a memorial stone still surviving outside the parish church, but this project should help set such local information within a bigger picture.

For more information about the project, which runs from April 2013 to November 2014, and public talks open to all - see <http://cullomptonclothtrade.wordpress.com/>

History for all in Bovey Tracey

A group of us from various organizations are working on the history of Bovey Tracey. This includes The Devonshire Association, Bovey Tracey Library, Devon County Council, Bovey Tracey Town Council, Dartmoor National Park Authority and Bovey Tracey Heritage Trust. We have started with work on the historic borough and we are planning more projects leading on from individual interests.

After tracing evidence of the historic borough, granted in 1260, we plan a walk to beat the bounds. This will take us through the central area of Bovey Tracey pointing out evidence from the thirteenth century which can still be seen on the ground today. The two Portreeve parks are still open land, and the view from one gives a vista of the historic borough. We will also see artefacts from the time of the fairs and markets as weights, measures and staves are conserved in the Council chamber, together with a copy of the original charter.

We hope that beating the bounds will bring forward more people interested in working with us on Bovey's history. Our next event is a garden finds archaeology session at the local library. Dr. Imogen Wood will be there to identify the finds, and we will map the areas represented. We hope this will be of interest to a wide range of residents, particularly those living in Fore Street, East Street, Mary Street and Hind Street -the sites of the original burgage plots. The local Horticultural Society, the WI, and the local primary school are assisting us with advertising this activity.

A future project will study the local water supply. The Vestry minutes from the 1800s give some information on water supply. Newspaper articles of the mid-eighteenth century show that development of tourism was important even then as it was reported that spending on clean water would be an investment as it could help attract visitors who might come to Bovey Tracey to improve their health. We also have information on the development of local wells by the Rural Sanitary Authority later in the 1800s. We plan to research related public health issues and the work of the borough and the manor in developing a clean water supply. There are several leats still evident in the field such as in the Parke Estate, leading to the mills in the centre of Bovey, and those in Brimley connected with the pottery works, and these will be included in our study. The wider use of water in the parish will also be looked at as we know of one water meadow, but perhaps there are more to be found.

We know we need to get out there and look at the history of our landscape so we plan to walk the parish in a systematic way.

If you are interested in helping us with any of these projects please do get in touch with me, or the local library.

Frances Billinge
fbillinge@btinternet.com

The Exe Estuary: past, present and future

It's easy to think that our local coastline has always looked like it does now. In fact, the Exe Estuary has changed significantly in the past as a result of both natural processes and human

intervention and it will continue to evolve in future years, posing challenges for those who manage the coast and live along its shores.



The Living with a Changing Coast (LiCCo) project, running until September 2014, focuses on the Exe Estuary and Poole Harbour, plus sites in Normandy, France. It aims to raise awareness of how the coast will change as a result of predicted climate change, sea level rise, coastal erosion and increased flood risk over the next 100 years. The project also helps coastal communities to understand what they can do to adapt to change, and how they can contribute to decision making processes.

In many cases one of the best ways of understanding future coastal change is by looking back. The project is gathering old photos, paintings, postcards, texts and other historic materials showing the Exe Estuary of yesteryear and is hoping to display these at a touring exhibition around the Exe in spring 2014. We'd love to hear from you if you have any historic materials or spoken reminiscences of the estuary that you'd like to share or if you'd like to be involved in the exhibition in any way.

Please contact Jane Lavick, Principal Engagement Officer at the LiCCo Project on 07917 238309 or email jane.lavick@environment-agency.gov.uk

You can find out more about the LiCCo project at www.licco.eu or see our short film about the Exe Estuary at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=am5msVhMuDY>

1441 Totnes Rent Roll

From the Devon History Society website I read that one of the aims of the society is: encouraging and co-ordinating historical research amongst the membership, and I am writing to ask if the project I am describing here may be of interest.

The project is to display the Totnes Rent Roll from 1441 which was acquired some time ago for Totnes before it went overseas.

A local charity, the D W Mitchell Charitable Trust (whom I work for) will fund an environmentally controlled display cabinet with a digital touch screen interpretation that is sufficiently portable to tour various suitable locations such as Museums, Libraries and other public and historic buildings in the area.

The current work and what I am writing to you about is the research and interpretation of the roll. This has been started by people on a voluntary basis as a project that interests them. A transcript and translation of the roll by Susan Laithwaite previously of the Devon Records Office has been completed and research work undertaken by Dr Mark Trewin, of the Devon Rural Archive, which as you know specialises in the history of buildings in the area.

What I am hoping is that one of your members might find this an interesting project to research further, in particular with regard to the people mentioned and more generally the events and places mentioned at the time of writing.

John Severn

Secretary to The D W Mitchell Charitable Trust

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Post: 33, Heather Park, South Brent TQ10 9PU

Registered charity No. 278841

Websites for Local Historians

There are many useful electronic resources available free of charge, as Ann Bond highlighted in the February newsletter. Details of other useful sites are outlined below.

OPEN UNIVERSITY INFORMATION SKILLS FOR RESEARCHERS

<www.open.ac.uk/infoskills-researchers/information-introduction.htm>

TNA: THE NATIONAL ARCHIVES. <www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/>

The government's national archive for England, Wales and the United Kingdom, 11 million documents from the UK central government, law courts and other national bodies. 1,000 years of the nation's records.

TNA Home Page: Click on RECORDS, and then click on LOOKING FOR A PERSON

The research guidance can help uncover a person's history. Each guide tells you where you can find and access the relevant records. The guides also point to useful records in other archives and organisations, and reveal which records are available online.

TNA Home Page: Click on RECORDS, and then click on LOOKING FOR A PLACE

To uncover the history of a place, a building or an institution.

TNA Home Page: Click on RECORDS, then click on, BROWSE GUIDANCE A-Z

Guidance covering a wide variety of topics. Click on a letter to browse by keyword. (Some material can be copied and pasted).

ARCHON DIRECTORY (part of TNA) <www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/archon/>

ARCHON is an online directory of contact and access details for over 3,000 UK and international archival repositories. Directory is searchable by area and alphabetically. 189 repositories listed in the Southwest. Australia, for example, has 30 repositories listed.

THE ARCHIVES HUB ARCHIVES <archiveshub.ac.uk/>

Archives Hub provides a gateway to thousands of the UK's richest archives. Representing over 180 institutions across the country. Search by person, subject etc. Frequently asked questions section useful.

BRITISH HISTORY ONLINE <www.history.ac.uk>

Digital library containing some of the core printed primary and secondary sources for the medieval and modern history of the British Isles. 'Top sources' - Local History, Historical geography, Urban & metropolitan, Parliamentary, Ecclesiastical & religious. Also searchable by region. Local History: Historical and topographical sources relating to specific places, full text online. Includes Magna Britannia, (Lysons), Magna Britannia: volume 6: Devonshire Gazetteer of markets and fairs and database of borough market privileges. Victoria County Histories.

GENUKI <www.genuki.org.uk/>

A reference site of genealogical information that is of particular relevance to the UK & Ireland. Go to contents and site map to locate Devon or other counties. Click on subject. Useful site for local historians.

DEVON PUBLIC LIBRARIES <www.devon.gov.uk/community/libraries.htm>
<www.plymouth.gov.uk/libraries>

Access to online databases available via Devon Libraries, using library card number and individual pin number. Click on Library catalogue. Some databases can be accessed from home, including: Oxford Dictionary of National Biography, national record of men and women who have shaped British history and culture, worldwide, from the Romans to the 21st century (60 vols. In print and available online in main libraries). Includes biographies of more than 58,326 men and women who died in or before the year 2008-plus 502 'Theme' articles. Search by name or text word search.

Newsbank UK Newspapers; Times Digital Archive; Nineteenth century periodicals; Ancestry

NB: AUSTRALIAN AND NEW ZEALAND PROVINCIAL NEWSPAPERS CAN BE ACCESSED ONLINE - FULL TEXT SEARCHABLE

DEVON FAMILY HISTORY SOCIETY <www.devonfhs.org.uk1>

DFHS website: Click on LINKS. Devon Places, Devon surnames, Emigration, Immigration, General Genealogy, Census, Sources for research, Getting started (first steps in family history really useful).

Bibliography of British and Irish History (BBIH). <www.history.ac.uk/projects/lbbih>

A database of over 500,000 records, by far the most complete online bibliographical resource on British and Irish history, including relations with the empire and Commonwealth, includes books, articles in journals, articles in collective volumes, and review articles. Updated three times a year, with at least 10,000 records added per annum. Subscription only, but available to access for £5 a year for subscribers to *The Local Historian*, journal of the British Association of Local History.

Jane Bliss
Hon. Editor, *The Devon Historian*

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