



Devon History News

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From the Chair, Katherine Findlay

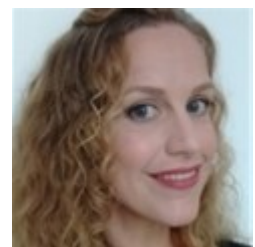
In February 1825, Samuel Taylor Coleridge described Nature busying herself at the start of spring. He wrote:

All Nature seems at work. Slugs leave their lair—

The bees are stirring—birds are on the wing—

And Winter slumbering in the open air,

Wears on his smiling face a dream of Spring!



I'm sure the signs of a new season and new life that can be seen everywhere are bringing a smile to all of us today, just as then. Coleridge of course remains one of Devon's most well-known sons, so I'm delighted that he has been honoured with a statue in his birthplace, Ottery St Mary. You can read all about the new artwork and the successful local fundraising campaign on pages 10 and 11.

The sonnet these lines are from, *Work without Hope*, goes on to muse on the purpose of work and busyness. With this in mind, I want to let you know about two fantastic events that we have coming up that highlight the industriousness of Devonians in centuries past and pay tribute to the hard work of researchers today.

On page 8, you can find full details of the Spring Symposium on Devon's 1920s' Houses that is being run by the *Devon in the 1920s* project. The event will bring together speakers to explore the burst of building activity in the county following the First World War. The symposium is the latest event put on by the project thanks to the tireless efforts of Julia Neville and a dedicated team of volunteers – our thanks as always to everyone involved.

To further celebrate the achievements of local history groups and share good practice, we have created a new series of events called 'Society Showcase'. The first event takes place on 17th June when we will join DHS members 'Way of the Wharves' in Bideford as they share their journey from community volunteer project to maritime education charity. Through talks, chats and a guided walk, we will discover the historical and cultural impact of East-the-Water's estuary wharves, ships, businesses and people, and hear from the team first-hand about what they uncovered, how they developed the project and how they are engaging different audiences. You can find out more about our events programme and how to book on page 27.

The DHS programme is going from strength to strength so I hope to see you soon at one of our events. In the meantime, please enjoy the newsletter and all the busyness of spring!

Editorial

As the United Kingdom settles into 2023 against a backdrop of economic vulnerability, industrial unrest and political turbulence, it has become something of a cliché for people to say that they're reminded of the 1970s. However, it is a cliché because it contains more than a hint of truth. Until relatively recently, the 1970s were viewed as the low water mark of contemporary British history, beset as they were by strikes, rampant inflation and unreliable government.



Reflections such as these prompt one to consider the fact that, while we spend much of our time studying aspects of Devon's history from the dimmer and more distant past, anything which has happened before the present time is history, even if, like the 1970s, most of us lived through it and can, to one extent or another, remember it. The fact that we can remember this past informs our ability to compare it with the present, even without the assistance of the type of primary sources which are essential to the study of the centuries which preceded our lives. And when we consider the sweep of history or weigh one era against another, we notice that while contemporary perceptions may have centred on the inevitability of decline, the long view of history enables us to recognise and celebrate advances, whether in medicine or technology or the shift in national mood which accompanies the transition from war to peace. While for various reasons – the political and economic circumstances mentioned earlier, and the fact that the Covid-19 pandemic can never truly be declared to be over – we haven't experienced a mood swing of this sort recently, it is the case that most of us are living less restricted and anxious lives than we were in 2020 and 2021.

One of the key legacies of the pandemic has been the advance of remote online communication for both work and leisure, with the use of Zoom and Teams becoming normalised far more quickly than would have been the case if the pandemic hadn't happened. The Devon History Society has embraced this with our ongoing programme of online talks; before 2020 I would have found it hard to believe that I would spend a winter evening at home in east Devon enjoying a talk about early Devonian settlers in Newfoundland given by someone actually in Newfoundland. By the time this edition appears, Professor James Clark will have delivered his talk on the dissolution of the monasteries in Devon, and we will be looking ahead to Helen Wilson speaking about the remarkable Pinwill Sisters, followed later in the year by 'in person' events in Plymouth and Bideford. Our thanks are due to Marie Leverett for her hard work on the Society's events programme, especially the organisation and publicity of the online strand.

Elsewhere in this edition we have Julia Neville's regular updates on the *Devon in the 1920s* project, and a new map of parish boundaries from Martin Ebdon. Finally, following my appeal for information about the whereabouts of the Society's own archives in the last edition, I collected a number of files and other papers from the former secretary Viv Styles at the end of October last year, and these are now stored at the Devon Heritage Centre. I have written about them on page 13.

Best wishes to all members for the forthcoming spring and summer.

Brian Carpenter



Project Highlights, Autumn 2022

Our Autumn Symposium: Vegetable, Flower and Fruit Cultivation in the 1920s – Continuity and Change

Our second Devon in the 1920s live event, a joint event hosted by both Devon History Society and Devon Gardens Trust, took place on Saturday September 10th at Exeter Central Library. This was a symposium on *Vegetable, Flower and Fruit Cultivation in Devon in the 1920s: Continuity and Change*. Whilst we struggled with technology and lost our keynote speaker who was laid low with Covid, the 30-plus participants appreciated contributions on market gardening, in the Bere Peninsula, in Plymstock and in Topsham, on the development of smallholdings after the First World War, on an Exmouth nurseryman, and on the growing of violets and ferns.

Expert Witness Seminars

Our thanks go to this autumn's speakers at our evening Zoom seminars. Bill Tupman explained some of the 1920s challenges to policing and the evolution of the service, all illustrated with photographs from the Museum of Policing in Devon and Cornwall. Paul Brassley challenged us to think about the 'shock of the new' in Devon, suggesting that what resulted was 'modernisation' rather than 'modernism'. And Tim Lomas took us through the planning, politics, funding and construction of the final piece of Devon's railway network from Torrington to Halwill Junction.

Progress on Research

The inflow of family histories has slowed down, but we are optimistic that the greater availability of the 1921 census may rekindle interest amongst those with Devon ancestors. If you've looked up your Devon family, do share the information about who they were and what they were doing in 1921.

As some of the research projects begun in the early days of the project draw to their conclusion, the project's archive is building up. Over the past six months we've received contributions on topics as varied as Sidmouth pioneers; the County Council's Horticultural Adviser, Miss Gunnell; housing in Newton St Cyres, Plymstock, Thorverton, and Torquay and the University College of the South West.

Do you live in a 1920s house? Or know a 1920s building?

We are actively looking for people who can contribute materials to the project. At the moment we'd particularly like to hear from anyone who lives in a house built in Devon in the 1920s who would be willing to share information about it – and a picture! In fact, if there is a 1920s building in your community why not send us a picture and any information you have about it. We know many village halls or institutes were built then and it would be great to build up an overview of that sort of community enterprise.

Julia Neville

Devon in the 1920s Project Manager

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Devon in the 1920s – Bringing in the evidence from the 1921 census

After a year when access to the 1921 census had been only by paying entry-by-entry – a tactic which might have worked for those who were only interested in their individual family history but has been extremely frustrating for those of us trying to do community histories – 2023 has brought a shift in the payment system. No doubt some DHS members are weighing up whether or not to upgrade their existing subscription to take advantage of a few weeks or months of unlimited access. Otherwise the £200 subscription still remains pretty steep. It's still a limitation on Devon in the 1920s researchers, so it was good to learn recently that you can now access the 1921 census at the Devon Heritage Centre, and I hope people will do so and persuade the South West Heritage Trust that that this subscription is worth maintaining.

I've been fortunate to have direct access through a couple of different societies, so I've been learning my way around it and beginning to work out how it will inform our understanding of the early 1920s. First, though, I need to let off steam! The transcriptions have not been checked through by anyone with local knowledge. This causes particular difficulty with searches, as the transcription forms the basis of the index you are searching. One of our Exeter's West Quarter researchers was puzzled to find that his 'Artizans Dwellings' had apparently gone missing. We had to go back to the Electoral Register information and search by surname to find what had happened. We found that No 1 Artizans Dwellings had been transcribed as "Aryains Dwellings". But the transcription had not even been done with consistency. No 2 appeared as Artians Dwellings, No 3 Artyans Dwellings and No 4 Arlizans Dwellings!

But enough of a moan. I report such problems to the Transcription Team and hope they will sort them out for the benefit of those who come after me. What is really interesting is the light the census entries cast on life at the very beginning of the 1920s. First of all we can now identify all those living at a single address. Our past researches have been based primarily on the Electoral Registers, so most children and many women have been unknown to us. Now we get a picture of the whole household.

Secondly, by comparison with the 1911 census, the information about employment is much more specific. The form captures three pieces of information: the occupation, the employer and the place of work. Actually a fourth piece of information that can be derived from the first three is the in work/out of work status of the employee. Our West Quarter records show, for example, the fact that Exeter's tobacco factory, Lloyds, was in the process of closure in June 1921, with many women recording the firm as their previous employer and their status as 'out of work', while some record they are still employed, but only on a temporary basis.

Another interesting area is that you can still see some of the impact of the First World War. The householder has to identify whether children under 16 have both parents alive, or only a father or a mother. The West Quarter is sprinkled with children such as the Fermor boys whose father, further research reveals, was killed in action, and whose mother had married again. Then sometimes unemployed men record their previous employer as their army regiment or corps. Men recorded with disabilities attributable to war, showing how they were coping. Ernest Steer, who suffered a gunshot wound injury through his right hand and left armpit, is recorded as a timekeeper for Willey's the big engineering firm – the kind of job employers were urged to employ ex-servicemen to do. There's even one head of household who describes himself as 'ex-soldier, training Court Farm, Dawlish, Devon County Council Training Centre.' The centre had been specifically set up to train ex-servicemen in farming and market gardening.

I could go on. Young people's employment is a good area for further investigation. The school leaving age had been raised – but how many teenagers were able to take advantage of staying on in education after their fourteenth birthday. Of course there are losses too. It's a pity to have lost the entry for 'number of years married' that appeared on the 1911 census, a useful aid in family reconstruction. But by and large the 1921 census is going to be a great asset to all our work on Devon in the 1920s, and I have resolved to become a regular reader.

Julia Neville

The Pipers of Lewdown

A 1920s Family



Most of the 1920s family accounts the Devon in the 1920s project has been collecting were written by the descendants of those families. From time to time, however, one comes our way which is written by someone else, someone who knew one of the family members and wanted to put on record their story.

Pam Morris sent us an account of her friend Phyllis, born Phyllis Piper in Lewdown in 1921, who died in 2008 leaving a store of photos and memorabilia. Phyllis's own memories are of course of her school days in the tiny school in Lewdown which had only about twenty pupils. But there are also photographs and information about how the Piper family made their living.

Phyllis's grandfather John, and indeed her great-grandfather John, had run the post office and general store in Lewdown for many years before the First World War. John senior died in 1923 but John junior continued to run the business supported by Phyllis's parents, George and Winifred Piper. To make a living, though, the family needed more than a post office business, or even the business of a post office and a general store as well stocked as this one (see picture above).

John did business for local estate agents, showing people round properties and offering to receive tenders. George bought a motor van, which advertised the delivery of fruit and flowers. A phone was installed, and George had cards printed describing himself as general dealer. He offered a car for hire.

These local entrepreneurial families may have been key to keeping villages together in the 1920s. We have a similar story about the Potters in Liverton, who ran the post office, had the first telephone, provided a carrier service to the market in Newton Abbot and eventually branched out into the provision of a motor lorry and then a motor bus and car hire service.

Does anyone else have information about these entrepreneurial figures in village communities in 1920s Devon? It would be interesting to see if we can make a collection of them!

Julia Neville

Devon in the 1920s project

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Eliza Mears: A story of life and death in the West Quarter in the 1920s

23 West Street, also known as Shooter's Court, was owned by Frank Shooter and subsequently by Mrs Shooter. It was a substantial property described in the Council records as having four sub-divisions, the front having four families, the rear one family, the end of court having three families; each family had mostly one or two rooms. There was a closing order for demolition of this property in 1932 as the premises were described as 'defective', the roof was corrugated iron sheets and it was dark and damp. The water supply was a tap in the yard and there were two WCs for 8 family units. There was no sink or washing facilities, the only cooking facilities were old grates and there were unventilated cupboards to store food.

In the 1921 census Eliza Mears, 45, lived in two rooms at the rear of 23 West Street. She was married and her occupation was described as 'home duties' but her husband was not recorded on the census return.

Eliza was born to Richard and Mary Ann Waters in 1876 in Ewings Street and was living there with her brother Richard in 1881. Her father was a bricklayer. Her mother gave birth to a daughter Ellen in 1883 and lost her the same year, a son Thomas was born and died in 1888, a third child William was born and died in 1889.

By 1891 the family had moved to Frog Street, her father still worked as a bricklayer, her mother was a rag sorter, and Eliza, 15, was a cigar maker.

Eliza married Emmanuel Ingram in 1899 when she was 23 and he was 24. A bricklayer's labourer like his father, he was brought up in the West Quarter. The records show multiple convictions for various offences for Emmanuel Ingram from the 1880s onwards, many of which were attributable to his father, also Emmanuel Ingram. But it is clear that the younger Emmanuel appeared in court for offences including stealing, assault, drunk and disorderly, cruelty to animals and offering meat not fit for human consumption, and was regularly fined and given time in Exeter Prison with hard labour.

Eliza and Emmanuel lost four children between 1899 and 1911. Their son Thomas died aged 17 months and was buried on 10th December 1901. Their son Emmanuel Richard died and was buried a month later on 9th January 1902. The coroner's report recorded "The child was at play on Tuesday but on Wednesday complained of a pain in his throat. He died on Wednesday night. The post-mortem showed the cause of death as heart failure as a result of a severe attack of diphtheria. There is no record of the other two chil-

dren who died (1911 census). Reginald, their only surviving child was born in 1902 and was baptised in HM Prison Exeter in July that year.

Emmanuel died in 1914. A notice in the local paper recorded the loss of a 'beloved husband of Liza Ingram, aged 39 years'.

Eliza married again in November that same year, 1914, to Samuel Mears. He had been living with his mother and sister in Frog Street in 1911, working as a general labourer. He was a member of the Labour Corps during World War One and was awarded an Army Pension.

On the 1919 electoral roll he was recorded as 'NM' - a naval or military voter, and that continues on the 1921 electoral roll. He was not recorded on the 1921 census, nor was her son Reginald who was 19 by that time, and there is no record of where either were at that time. Her husband is no longer on the electoral register from 1929 but there is no record of his death.

The death of children in the 19th and early 20th century was a much more frequent occurrence than would be common today so although Eliza's experience would not be unique, one wonders how she coped with so many losses in her life. In addition to the death of her siblings, her four children and her husbands, her father died in 1915, her mother in 1925, and her brother in 1933.

In common with the majority of West Quarter residents there is no detail of Eliza's day to day life, but she remained close by the West Quarter, living alone in Friar's Terrace in the 1939 Register and died in 1951, being buried in Higher Cemetery.

Maddy Jevon

Country House Conversion

Many of the cottages and other properties which were refurbished with funds provided by Chamberlain's 1926 Housing (Rural Workers) Act have now been identified, but this country house, which was converted into several living units, still eludes us. The house is believed to be in North Devon and is perhaps still in multiple occupancy today. If you think you know where this house is, please let the editor of the newsletter know. To see some of the other houses, follow this link:

<https://www.devonhistorysociety.org.uk/devon-house-search/>



Devon in the 1920s

Spring Symposium on Devon's 1920s' Houses

Saturday April 29th 2023, 10.00 to 15.00

Rougemont Room, Exeter Central Library, EX4 3PQ

This year's spring symposium from the *Devon in the 1920s* project is presented in conjunction with the Devon Buildings Group.

The numbers of inadequate and run down houses in Britain were recognised even before the First World War and efforts made for the first time to get local authorities to build housing. After the war, promises were made nationally about the need to provide 'homes for heroes', and local authorities were now expected to play a major part in building what became known as 'council housing'. New estates sprang up on the fringe of urban areas, new streets or blocks in country towns.

But house-building was not confined to councils. Growing numbers of white-collar and supervisory workers aspired to buy houses of their own. Building society numbers expanded to offer them mortgages with which they could buy their own homes. The newly retired, whether from other parts of the UK or from the Empire were looking for seaside or rural retreats in the county. The *Devon in the 1920s* symposium provides an introduction to the wide range of developments that were going on: local authorities building new council housing or rehabilitating tumbledown properties; and architects and builders developing new housing in quantity – everything from a bit of infill to an existing street, a new row or a new estate, to the luxurious detached country house set in its own landscaped grounds.

We are delighted to welcome as our keynote speaker, Dr John Boughton, Honorary Research Fellow in the School of Architecture at the University of Liverpool, author of *Municipal Dreams; the Rise and Fall of Council Housing* (2018) and *A History of Council Housing in 100 Estates* (2022), who will speak about council housing in the 1920s with particular reference to Devon. Phil Planel will talk about the rehabilitation of rural cottages, Paul Cleave about 1920s domestic interiors, I will do a portmanteau presentation about a number of local architect, and a National Trust will speak about Coleton Fishacre. Members of the *Devon in the 1920s* housing group will contribute posters of their own case studies.

Julia Neville



Alexandria Road, Sidmouth

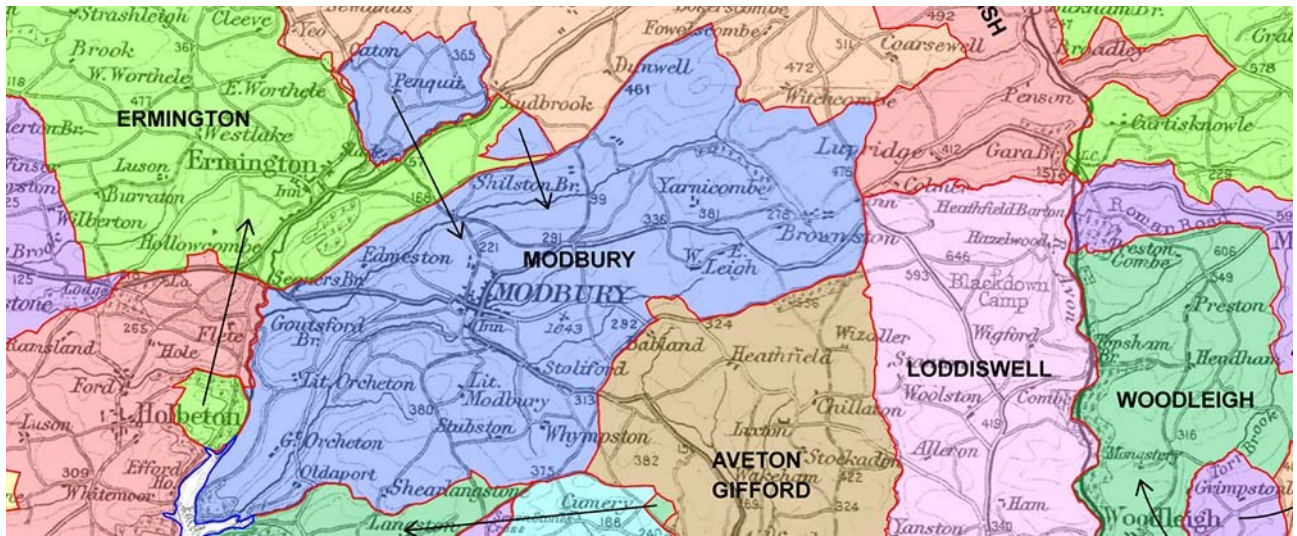
A New Online Map of Historic Parish Boundaries

In the 2022 volume of *The Devon Historian*, I contributed an article about the representation of parish boundaries on Devon's 466 tithe maps. In the course of researching the article, I made a digital map of the parish boundaries shown on those maps, in order to assess how fully the boundaries had been recorded and to find places where two tithe maps disagreed about a boundary's position. It turned out that missing boundaries (that is, boundaries not shown on any tithe map because the land on both sides had been omitted from the surveys) were nearly all of two kinds. Either they were boundaries between the little urban parishes in Exeter, or they were boundaries between commons on certain parts of Dartmoor. By sourcing those boundaries from first-edition 1:2500 Ordnance Survey maps, I had a complete map of Devon's parish boundaries in the mid-nineteenth century. An extract was used for the upper half of Figure 5 in the article.

Having done all the hard work of copying the boundaries, it occurred to me that it would be easy to turn it into a more useful map by colouring-in the parishes and overlaying them on a suitable topographical background. This is now done and I have made the map freely available to view online. Follow the link below, or alternatively use a search engine to find the Martin Ebdon Maps website, select the Resources tab, and then go to the 'Devon's Old Parish Boundaries' page.

<https://www.martinebdon.co.uk/parishes/>

The map viewer is reasonably intuitive to use, working either with the mouse on a PC or by 'swipe and pinch' on a phone or tablet touch-screen. Buttons for zooming in or out appear in the upper-left corner when you interact with the viewer. The extract here shows what the map looks like:



The topographical background is derived from an edition of Bartholomew's maps at the scale of one inch to two miles, which show the landscape just before the First World War. This background is slightly anachronistic because nearly all the parish boundaries were obtained from tithe maps, which date from several decades earlier (about 1840). However, at this map scale, the landscape did not change very much in the intervening period, except for some town growth (especially at Plymouth and Torquay) and the addition of numerous railways. I considered using present-day mapping for the background, but could not find a source with a roughly similar scale that is in the public domain.

This map may be useful for researchers using documents that were created parish by parish, obviously parish registers, but also vestry minutes, poor law records, and so on. The boundaries shown on the map pre-date the alterations of civil parish boundaries that began after 1876 and have continued to the present time.

Martin Ebdon

Last October I had the pleasure of attending the unveiling of the statue of Samuel Taylor Coleridge in Ottery St Mary churchyard. Here Chris Wakefield writes about the statue, the installation of which was the culmination of a long campaign.

Coleridge Statue completed after 140 years

A ten year campaign in Ottery St Mary by the Coleridge Memorial Trust (an offspring of Ottery Heritage Society), reached a fitting conclusion on 21st October last year with the unveiling of a life-size bronze figure of Coleridge standing on a granite 'outcrop' in the parish churchyard. The occasion fell on the 250th anniversary of the poet's birth in 1772 in the College School House, which stood immediately south of the churchyard.

The idea for a memorial to Coleridge in Ottery has been around for well over a century, but the poet's relationship with his home town was undermined by his father's sudden death and his subsequent removal, at nine years of age, to London as a boarder pupil at Christ's Hospital School. This marked the start of a largely unexplained estrangement between Coleridge and his Ottery family which was never fully resolved. The causes are complex and impossible to fathom this far in the future, but it is apt that he is now

welcomed back to the town as a prodigal returned.

The figure offers Coleridge around the time he produced his most emblematic poetry, with notebook in hand, walking stick resting on his shoulder and searching a pencil to record a passing thought. The walking stick has a richly carved floral head to remind us of one of many quotable quotes from Coleridge, in this case an unanswerable question...

If a man could pass thro' Paradise in a Dream, & have a flower presented to him as a pledge that his Soul had really been there, & found that flower in his hand when he awoke—Aye? and what then?

The flower is a small tribute to this particularly delightful notebook scribble, but it can stand for countless similar Coleridgean pleasures that are equally a part of his legacy. Bring your own to a viewing!

The sculpture is complemented by a commemorative plaque bearing a few lines of Coleridge's 1798 poem 'Frost at Midnight' which includes mention of the church tower and the bells - 'the poor man's only music'.

The funds required to commission the work from local sculptor Nicholas Dimbleby were raised between 2017 and 2019 with help of a crowdfunding campaign, assistance from East Devon District Council, Ottery St Mary Heritage Society and a raft of generous private donors.

It was a pleasure to have members of the Devon History Society Council, past and present, at the unveiling and this may be a good moment to invite DHS members (and members of groups affiliated to the DHS) to visit the poet restored to his birthplace and make a new year's resolution to read a little more of his considerable (but still largely uncelebrated) work.

Chris Wakefield



Devon Archives and Local Studies Service

The second half of 2022 and early 2023 have seen one major project come to fruition, another make excellent progress and a third commence.

The first of these was the volunteer project, made possible through a grant from the National Lottery Heritage Fund, to transcribe the Devon sections of John Norden's survey of Crown Lands, compiled between 1613 and 1617. The survey covers the manors of Ashburton, Bovey Tracey, Bradninch, Buckfastleigh, Dunkeswell, Exeter Castle, Heathfield and Ottery St Mary, and is contained in a 400 page manuscript written in a mixture of Latin and English and held by the London Metropolitan Archives. Norden attended local courts, consulted records and walked the lanes and fields before compiling a register of holdings, tenants, values, and obligations, together with many other details. As a result, the surveys contain a wealth of social and economic information. A cohort of volunteers was recruited via the Friends of Devon's Archives, and, after some palaeography training, they transcribed the sections of the survey that related to the areas they were interested in. The full transcript is now available via our online catalogue, and this also contains a link to a digitised copy of the original survey, which is on the website of the London Metropolitan Archives. We are extremely grateful to Drs David Stone and Des Atkinson for managing the project, Frances Billinge, whose original idea it was, and all the volunteers who contributed so much time and hard work. A celebration to mark the completion of the project was held at the Devon Heritage Centre in late January, and the transcription will be published in printed form later this year.

Ever since the South West Heritage Trust was formed in late 2014, one of our principal ambitions has been to provide better accommodation for the outstanding Westcountry Studies Library collection. Many readers will recall that until 2014 the library occupied the same building in central Exeter – the old City Library – which the old Devon Record Office was based in until 2005. When the decision was taken to sell that building the Westcountry Studies Library was moved to Great Moor House. The acquisition of the library greatly enhanced the holdings of the Heritage Centre, but we were initially compelled to store it in some areas of the building which were not especially suitable because of their temperature and distance from the archive searchroom. During 2022, the majority of the collection was moved to a specially adapted strongroom which is adjacent to the areas where the Heritage Centre's manuscript collection is stored. We are now able to give this magnificent collection the care and respect that it deserves, in addition to making it more easily accessible to researchers.

In the last edition I mentioned that we had been successful in obtaining a grant from The National Archives to catalogue the archives of the Cary family of Torquay. The archivist appointed to work on the project, Stuart Tyler, who was previously a member of staff between 2012 and 2019, began work in October 2022 and has already discovered a lot of previously unknown material, including some superb architectural plans of buildings erected in nineteenth century Torquay and beyond. There are also some excellent collections of manorial court rolls, many of which are medieval, relating to Torbay but also lands held by the Carys in north and west Devon and the South Hams. We have been in touch with the public engagement team at the Carys' former home, Torre Abbey, and it is hoped that the project will culminate in an exhibition there in early 2024. Watch this space for further details.

Digital preservation and audio-visual archives are areas in which our work has greatly expanded in recent years. In November 2022, after problems with our previous system, we moved to a new digital preservation system provider. Key staff have been trained in using the new system, and a major piece of work is taking place to 'ingest' all of the records which we held in the old system, and then to ingest records which are ready to be processed but which weren't ingested into the old system.

This year we will also be continuing work to transfer all the digital records which are still on their original media (CD, USB stick, hard drive, etc.) to our servers. This will take a significant amount of staff time and we expect the appraisal, cataloguing and ingesting part of the project to continue into 2024 and possibly beyond.

One of our archivists attended a conference on 9th February to celebrate the end of the *Unlocking Our Sound Heritage* project. This was a major project, led by the British Library, to digitise, catalogue and promote sound archives from across the UK. Around 600 items from Devon and Somerset were digitised as part of this project.

Across the two counties we still have over 2,000 sound archives which have not been digitised, and time is running out to save them before they degrade and become unplayable. We have joined other archives in the South West to bid for grant funding for further sound archives work, building on the success of *Unlocking Our Sound Heritage* and are waiting to hear whether our initial bid has been successful.

Brian Carpenter

The Devon History Society Archives

Readers may recall that I made an appeal in the editorial of the August 2022 edition of *Devon History News* for any information about the archives of the Society. It turned out that the Society's records were still with our former Secretary Viv Styles, and so I collected them from Viv's house in Bovey Tracey at the end of October last year.

The records extend back to the early years of the Society, which was established as the Standing Conference for Devon History in late 1969 and became the Devon History Society ten years later. The collection includes agendas, attendance lists and minutes for both Council meetings and AGMs between the late 1970s and 2020, although there are gaps in the dates covered, as well as papers relating to the Society's annual book and dissertation awards, relations with affiliated societies, the Friends of Devon's Archives and the South West Heritage Trust, and programmes of events. There's also a file of papers relating to the production of the Society's 40th anniversary volume *Aspects of Devon History*.

The names of many illustrious figures in the study of Devon's history and the administration of the Society – Walter Minchinton, Robin Stanes, John Pike, Todd Gray, Christopher Jago, Julia Neville and many more – flow from the pages of the files, and it has been nice to add the archives of the DHS to those of other similar organisations – such as the Devon and Cornwall Record Society and the Friends of Devon's Archives – which were already stored at the Heritage Centre. The collection has the reference 'DHS', and more extensive details of its contents can be found by searching for the name of the Society on the Devon online archive catalogue (<https://devon-cat.swheritage.org.uk/>).

As previously mentioned, there are no records of AGMs before 1979, and the earliest Council minutes date from 1982, so if anyone becomes aware of any further records, please let me know by email to either dhsnewsletter@devonhistorysociety.org.uk or brian.carpenter@swheritage.org.uk.

Brian Carpenter

National Recognition for *Devon Historian* article

An article by Esther Chant, an Archives and Local Studies Assistant at the Devon Heritage Centre, 'The Cult of St Urith in pre-Reformation Devon' in *The Devon Historian* volume 91 (2021), has been chosen as one of the three runners-up in the 'long article' category of the British Association for Local History Publications Awards for 2023.

The notification received by the Editor of *The Devon Historian*, Mike Sampson included the following:

It is very pleasing to see a paper in The Devon Historian being shortlisted once again – a real tribute to the continuing quality of the journal and the hard work of its editor (and of course to a lovely county)! Esther's paper was piped to the post, and could easily have been the overall winner.

West of England and South Wales Women's History Network, 30th Annual Conference

Women and the Natural World: historical perspectives on nature, climate and environmental change.

Saturday 30th September 2023, at Exeter Central Library

Keynote Speaker: Professor Nicola Whyte , Co-Director of the Centre for Environmental Arts and Humanities. University of Exeter.

This conference will offer a broad perspective on women and the environment over time. Themes could include women's involvement in:

Environmental and natural sciences

Conservation and eco-activism by individuals and in campaigning organisations seeking to protect nature and biodiversity.

Weather forecasting and climate change

Rescue and recovery work following environmental events such as floods, earthquakes, volcanoes and hurricanes.

Land management practices e.g. enclosures

Gardens, allotments, parks and garden cities

Farming, gardening and agricultural work

Botanical and zoological illustration

Would you be interested in presenting a paper (approximately 20 minutes) at the conference? If so, please send an abstract of up to 300 words to Kath Holden, Chair, katherineunaholden@gmail.com no later than 26th May 2023.

To receive further information and booking details about the conference, please contact Julia Neville, j.f.neville@btinternet.com.

Membership Fees

As with many organisations the costs of running the DHS have increased over recent years. The last time our membership fees were increased was in 2012. The DHS council have reviewed these rates and have changed their structure and prices as detailed below. These changes were agreed at the AGM in October 2022, to take effect from 1st May 2023.

Membership: £20.00 (to include all those living at the same address)

A 50% discount may apply to those on certain benefits or in further education.

Affiliated Society membership: £20.00

Groups currently affiliated to FODA: £10.00

Corporate membership: £22.50

(Please note that existing Life Members retain their benefits.)

Membership is due annually on 1st May and for ease of administration we prefer members to pay by standing order.

For those members using online banking please would you amend your standing order in line with the above fees using your name as the reference.

For those members paying by cheque please would you consider setting-up a standing order payment:

Business Account Name: The Devon History Society (Reg. Charity 262485)

Sort Code: 56 00 49

Account No: 23046031

Please use your name as the reference.

If you still wish to pay by cheque please address to:

DHS Treasurer

8 Swains Road

Budleigh Salterton

EX9 6HZ

Thank you

Martin Smith

Treasurer

BOOKS

A Photographic Friendship: James Ravilious and Chris Chapman

2022 marked 50 years on from when the two Devon photographers James Ravilious and Chris Chapman embarked on their careers. Back in 1972 James Ravilious began taking pictures of North Devon for the Beaford Archive and in the same year Chris Chapman took his first photographs of Dartmoor.

A Photographic Friendship: James Ravilious and Chris Chapman (published in October 2022 by Devon-based Skerryvore Productions) celebrates this anniversary by bringing together 25 specially chosen pairings of Devon images by these two master photographers of rural life and landscape. Edited by Mark Hawthorth-Booth, this new book also includes a foreword by Michael Morpurgo and a transcript of a recent conversation between Chris Chapman and Ella Ravilious, James's daughter.

The Devon History Society can take some credit for the appearance of this book. As the book's introduction acknowledges, the idea for this publication stemmed from a chance conversation between guests at the Devon History Society's unveiling of its blue plaque in honour of James Ravilious at Chulmleigh in September 2021 (see *Devon History News* 29, February 2022, pp 21-2).

Copies of the book can be bought from The Bookery in Crediton, the Burton in Bideford, the Royal Albert Memorial Museum shop and other local bookshops. It is also available online from <https://beaford.org/shop/a-photographic-friendship> and <http://www.chrischapmanphotography.co.uk/pub.htm>



The book contains pairings of photographs of Devon life and landscape by Ravilious (left) and Chapman (right).

Book Review

Abbotsleigh Priory 1861- 2018. The Abbotskerswell Village History Society Series, 6, pp.86 with illustrations. Available from Abbpast, Model Stores and Orchard Café Abbotskerswell.

This is the current booklet in the excellent Abbotskerswell history series written by Peter Wade and his team of volunteers from Abbpast, the local history society.

These booklets have a winning formula. They are well researched with interesting photographs from family collections. The style is highly readable and the slim nature of the booklets means they are posted to

friends and relatives across the world which has encouraged useful collaboration.

the history of Abbotsleigh Priory, being a convent of the Order of St Augustine of the Roman Catholic Church, is of particular interest to those researching other sisterhoods in Devon. Although it was of a different denomination and an enclosed order, there are interesting comparisons to be made with the Devon House of Mercy in Bovey Tracey which was set up at the same time. This was in the era of much heated debate arising from the Oxford/Tractarian movement.

This booklet starts with an introduction explaining how research in the Plymouth Diocesan Archive in Exeter unearthed a wealth of information about the Priory. Chapter 1 describes the Augustinian Rule under which the nuns in the Priory lived. Chapter 2 explains the development of Roman Catholic convents in England from 1795. Chapters 3 and 4 give details of how the order obtained land in Abbotskerswell and the building work which ensued. Chapter 5 places the development of the convent within the context of Roman Catholicism in the wider Newton Abbot area. In Chapters 6 and 7 we learn about the hierarchy of the nuns in the Priory and of the lives of some of them. The garden and the farm used to support the Priory kitchens is described in Chapter 8. Like many other convents the number of professed nuns dwindled in the middle of the twentieth century and Chapter 9 describes the end of the Priory, with Chapter 10 showing how it was then transformed into retirement flats.

Many interesting stories about Abbotsleigh Priory are told, and the care of those with mental health problems is one of them.

Further research could consider how institutions with a powerful female head encouraged local women to take on positions of responsibility in other spheres.

Now called *The Priory*, the building of the convent and its grounds are open as part of charity garden schemes and I would urge you to visit. The architecture and gardens are very beautiful and the nuns' graveyard is poignant. I await eagerly the next volume in this history series.

Frances Billinge



A History of Colyton Grammar School from the perspective of its Founders: the Colyton Chamber of Feoffees

A new book on the history of Colyton Grammar School has been published by its founders, the Colyton Chamber of Feoffees. The book reveals how everyday life in the historic community of Colyton Parish impacted on the way in which the School developed. The records show:

that the agrarian calendar had a significant impact on school attendance with boys regularly absent during 'potato planting' and 'apple picking' seasons;

19th century school inspection reports frequently contained examples of students who failed to attend classes because they 'had no shoes to attend school', had contracted smallpox or suffered from bad eyesight;

examination papers were couched in language with which students would be familiar e.g. arithmetic questions referred to calculations based on traditional land measurements.

Commenting on the publication Mr Tim Harris, BA Hons, FCCT, NPQH, Head Teacher of Colyton Grammar School, said:

“Sarah Charman’s thoroughly researched history of Colyton Grammar School will be welcomed by old Colytonians and present students alike. The school has a long and distinguished history in delivering the highest standards of education and academic achievement. This new work recognises and celebrates the work done in the past whilst also pointing the way towards future developments. We are delighted that Sarah has undertaken this significant project and hope that readers will enjoy discovering more about this school’s unique story through her pages.”

Mr John Mills, Chairman of Colyton Chamber of Feoffees also commented:

“The research work completed by Sarah during the preparation of this book is of the highest quality and I’m sure that over many years into the future will provide a base for greater understanding of the history of Colyton and the factors which have been important to its development.”

The book covers the period from the School's foundation by the Chamber of Feoffees in the second half of the sixteenth century to 1930 when the new School premises were opened in Colyford. It traces the growth of the School during the three centuries it was based in Old Church House in Market Place, Colyton, through to the rapid expansion in student numbers, including the admission of girls, in the decades surrounding WW1. It also offers a slice of social history in a small East Devon town and reflects the impact of charitable decisions taken by the Feoffees on behalf of the community of Colyton Parish.

Key findings of the research include the detailed costings for and description of the materials used and the planning undertaken by the Feoffees in the early years of C17th for the refurbishment of the school building; the impact of different Headmasters on the way the School was run and developed over the centuries; its expansion and growing academic reputation was interspersed with short periods when it was closed for a few years apparently for lack of pupils and the sometimes difficult relationship between successive Head Masters and the Feoffees. From the late nineteenth century onwards the study reflects the impact of the growing involvement of national and local education policies and priorities on the running of the school.

The book costs £10.99 (+ £3.70/£4.30 postage and packing) and can be purchased either direct or by website/email link from

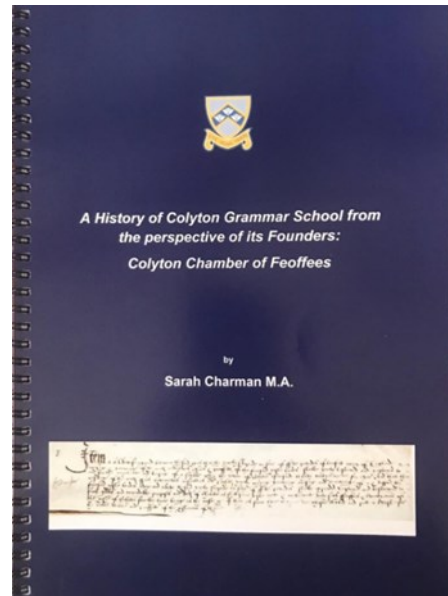
- Colyton Heritage Centre, Market Place, Colyton or by email: sarah@colytonheritagecentre.org;
- Colyton Grammar School – via website link <https://ocs.colytongrammar.com/shop/product/83>
- The Little Shop, Market Place, Colyton;
- Archway Bookshop, Trinity House, Axminster, 01297 33744 or by email browse@archwaybookshop.co.uk
- Colyford Post Office, Seaton Road, Colyford, 01297 552386 or by email colyfordpo@outlook.com

Sarah Charman is a retired civil servant who currently serves as Bailiff to the historic Colyton Chamber of Feoffees in East Devon, is a Trustee of Colyton Parish History Society and a volunteer for the National Trust at Killerton House. She has a BA in Politics and Law from the University of Kent at Canterbury and an MA in Political Science from Ohio University.

For many years she worked at the heart of the British government, in the Home Office, Cabinet Office and at No 10 Downing Street, where she served as a press adviser to two Prime Ministers, Margaret Thatcher and John Major, from 1988 to 1992.

In 1980 she researched and co-wrote a book on the history of the North Atlantic Assembly, based in Brussels: *The Parliamentarians' Role in the Alliance*. In 2017 she wrote a booklet on the *History of Lace Making in Colyton, East Devon*, to accompany an exhibition organised by Colyton Parish History Society and in 2018 she had an article published in *The Devon Historian* on *The Colyton Feoffees and Twenty Men*.

She is currently writing a book on the life of Sir Thomas Gates, who was born in Colyton Parish in 1561 and went on to become Governor of Virginia.



Sarah Charman with her book outside Colyton Grammar School (by kind permission of Dr Emma Styles)

NEWS FROM AFFILIATED SOCIETIES

Chagford Community Archive

If you want to find something out about a bit of history in the Chagford area, chances are you'll turn up something of interest in Chagford's community archive. Set up in 2018 with the aid of a National Lottery grant by the Chagford Local History Society, it's located next to the town library at the Jubilee Hall. Since then a team of volunteers has been painstakingly trawling through a mass of documents, photographs, maps and other paper-based materials, cataloguing each item on a state-of-the-art database. The catalogue will ensure that each item can be easily found in the archive room, where everything is stored methodically and securely. Covid had brought much of the work to a standstill, but it resumed earlier this year and now the Chagford Community Archive is ready to receive the public.

If you're looking for evidence of an ancestor, a long-gone business, a public event, or other aspects of Chagford's past, there may be an item in our archive to illuminate your search. To visit the archive please book up in advance. As we are run entirely by volunteers our opening hours are limited, but visits are free. To book an appointment please use the contact form at <https://www.chagfordlocalhistorysociety.org.uk/the-archive/>, clearly stating what you want to find out about. It's essential that we know in advance the nature of your enquiry so we can locate the appropriate material to be ready for your visit. We make a modest charge for photocopying and filming archive materials and ask all our visitors to respect the Archive's /donors' copyright. Donations to support our running costs are welcome, as are new volunteers to join our team. Full training will be given.

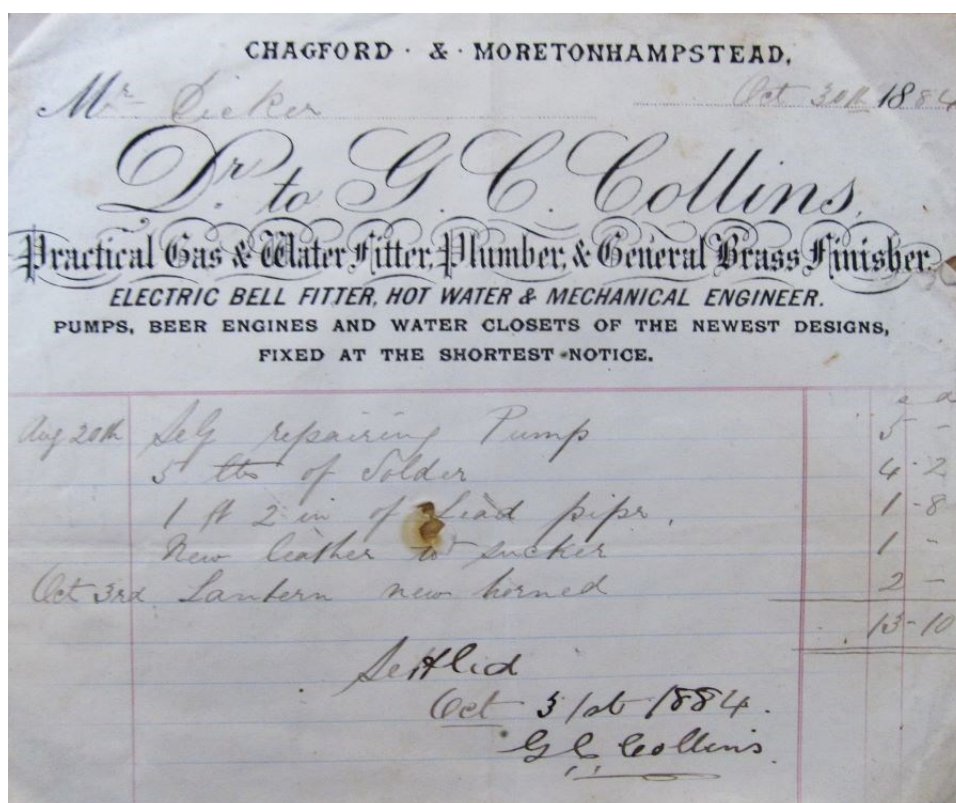
For more information, contact us on: enquiries4clhs@gmail.com or through our website.

The Chagford Community Archive will be holding an Open Day on Saturday 25th March between 10 and 4.





Postcard: Chagford old peal of bells and ringers, 1914. © Chagford Archive



Invoice, 1884. © Chagford Archive

Way of the Wharves

Collaborating with The Burton at Bideford, Way of the Wharves are organising a short series of maritime related talks.

With boat building documented back to Elizabethan times the Torridge Estuary and Bideford have a long and fascinating maritime history. The story of this port on the south west coast is dominated by maritime links across the Bristol Channel, to Ireland, Europe and the Americas.

Speakers and Topics

Date	Title	Speaker
Thursday 9th February From 18.15-19.45 https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/496355892837	Maritime heritage stories from the Torridge	Mike Teare Way of the Wharves
Thursday 9th March From 18.15-19.45 https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/496361088377	Future of shipbuilding on the Torridge	Tom Hart General Manager Harland and Wolff
Thursday 13th April From 18.15-19.45 https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/496361680147	Pirates, merchants, smugglers, and spies. North Devonians and the Spanish Inquisition.	Teresa Tinsley Local historian

WOTW are giving talks to a number of local groups and will have a stand at local events to promote the charity and continue to work on the campaign for a centre to celebrate Bideford's maritime heritage.

In June we are planning to host a meeting for Devon History Society in Bideford with talks and a guided walk. We continue to contribute to the DHS *Devon in the 1920s* project.

WOTW recently printed the article 'Wool, wharves and water'. This is available to download at:

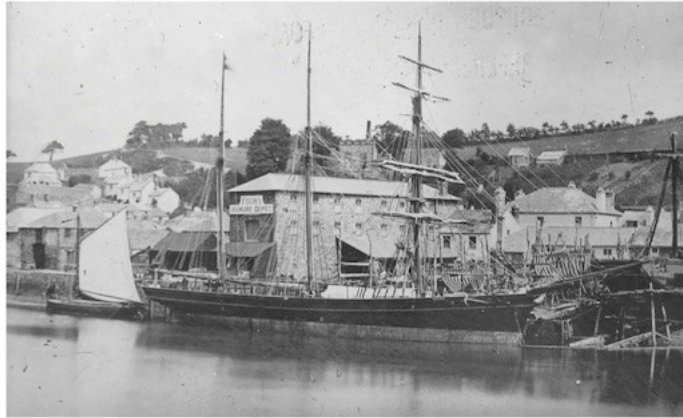
<https://thewharves.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/WoolwharveswaterA4.pdf>

Way of the Wharves

www.thewharves.org

Wool, wharves and water

Michael Teare December 2022



From Elizabethan times until the end of the 19th century East-the-Water was one of the centres of shipbuilding on the Torridge. Here the barquentine *Winifred* is moored at Restarick's shipyard about 1879.

'A History of East-the-Water, Bideford' has just been awarded the 2022 Devon History Society prize for a local history society book. To celebrate the award and the first anniversary of publication, Way of the Wharves takes a look at the historical and commercial importance of the area. With shipbuilding, potteries, lime kilns, a coal mine, the railway, timber import, horticulture companies, gas and electricity works and even a munitions factory the east shore of the Torridge has been an important industrial centre for Bideford and the estuary. The wharves along Barnstaple Street, East-the-Water, are set to undergo a transformation, with a £20 million re-development. This book sets out to record the commercial importance of the site and history of the local community.

Historic fireplace loses its mantle

George Sandeman

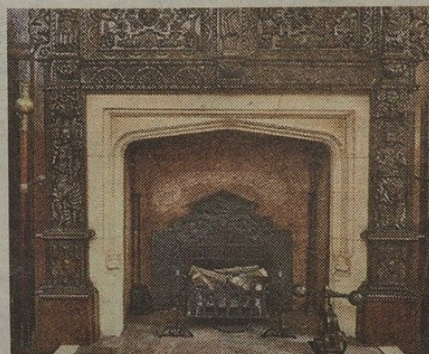
Residents of a coastal town in Devon have discovered that one of their most treasured artefacts is a copy.

The fireplace surround has had pride of place at the guildhall in Barnstaple for more than 70 years and was thought to be one of the last remaining pieces of heritage from its golden age.

In the 14th century, the town began to prosper as a centre for the wool industry and reached its zenith by the early 17th century after establishing itself as an Atlantic trading port.

The origins of the mantelpiece are not definitively known, with some locals believing that it was originally salvaged from the Spanish Armada, which sailed to the UK in 1588, while others thought that it was made in England.

It was acquired by the town council in 1949 from the house of a former mayor and originally belonged to Pentecost Dodderidge, who was MP for



The mantelpiece has held pride of place in a Devon museum for 70 years

Barnstaple three times in the early 17th century. However, new research for an exhibition organised by the Museum of Barnstaple and North Devon has found that the original mantelpiece was sold to an unknown buyer some time in the late 19th century.

They think that the owner of the original at that time had had a copy made, which is what eventually

ended up in the hands of the council. Dr Todd Gray MBE, the historian who carried out the research, said that he had found out the truth in a forgotten newspaper report which described Barnstaple's mantle as a copy.

He said the original fireplace surround was "typically English" and explained there was demand for such woodwork among foreign buyers at the time.

"In the late 1800s and early 1900s there was a tremendous market in the USA for building salvage from English houses," he said.

"Things like panelling and woodwork had little value here but [they] would get tremendous prices over there.

"The real question is where it is now. It could be in a random house across the globe — in America or Australia.

"Someone could be reading a newspaper in front of their fireplace with it and have no idea or understanding of its provenance. It's quite extraordinary."

COLYTON PARISH HISTORY SOCIETY

PROGRAMME OF MEETINGS FOR 2023

Wednesday 22 nd March	TRAINS & TRAMS OF COLYTON THROUGH THE AGES by Brian Lowing	Colyton Town Hall
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Wednesday 26 th April	THE HIDDEN HISTORY OF BEER QUARRY CAVES by Kevin Cahill & Steve Rodgers	Colyton Town Hall
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Wednesday 27 th September	SOTHEBY'S & FINE ART PHOTOGRAPHY by Lucilla Phelps	Colyton Town Hall
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Wednesday 25 th October	FAIRGROUNDS AT WAR 1939-45 by Kay Townsend	Colyton Town Hall
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Wednesday 22 nd November	A HISTORY OF SEASIDE TOWNS by Stewart Raine	Colyton Town Hall
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All talks start at 7.30 pm. The attendance fee for each talk is £2 for Members and £4 for visitors; this includes refreshments.

Woodbury History Society

Programme for 2023

The Society will be holding an exhibition on Saturday, 24th June in which the large collection of artefacts found by Nigel Tucker, a well known detectorist from Woodbury, will be on display. Nigel, who died in 2021, left his impressive collection and library of reference books to Woodbury History Society, and these are held in our Archive and Library Room.

2nd March 'The Lower Otter Restoration Project' – an illustrated talk by Kate Ponting and Charlotte Hodgson

4th May 'A Curious Look at Devon Churches' – an illustrated talk by Robert Hesketh

7th September 'Topsham, Echoes of a Maritime Past' – an illustrated talk by Jan Betteridge of Topsham Museum

2nd November 'Dartmoor Prison' – an illustrated talk by Simon Dell

All talks are held in Woodbury Village Hall at 7.30 pm, except the November talk which will be at 2.30 pm. The exhibition will be held in Woodbury Village Hall from 10.30 am until 3.30 pm.

Visitors are very welcome to attend any of our meetings and exhibition.

Oldway, Paignton

Thanks to National Lottery players, the 'Developing a resilient future for Oldway' project is well underway. We now have a full team of specialist consultants carrying out research and surveys, and starting to develop plans. As we enter this new phase, there will be regular updates in the Paignton Projects newsletter.

Please make sure that you are signed up to receive news of progress and to find out about opportunities to take part in public consultation later in the project programme. This will build on the insights and ideas that local people fed into earlier phases of work and we hope that you will continue to give us your views as the plans develop.

You can sign up here: <https://public.govdelivery.com/accounts/UKTORBAYCOUNCIL/signup/33327>

In the meantime, please keep in touch and let me know if you have any queries or thoughts about the project.

Katherine Findlay

katherine@katherinefindlay.co.uk

NEWS FROM PLYMOUTH

The Plymouth History Festival for 2023 will take place the first two weeks of October, rather than May, for the first time. Please keep an eye on The Box website for more details.

The Local Studies Day will be held on Saturday 7th October 2023 and will take place in the Roland Levin-sky Building, Plymouth, between 10 am and 4 pm.

More details to follow in the August issue of *Devon History News*.

The Box

<https://www.theboxplymouth.com/blog/press-release/2023-exhibition-programme-revealed>

This year marks the 300th Anniversary of Sir Joshua Reynolds' birth in Plympton St Maurice. Our displays will include archives and objects in The Box collections which shed light on the art on display, so there will be much for history lovers to enjoy.

OBITUARY

David Cornforth

1950-2022

David Cornforth, who died in December 2022 at the age of 72, was a highly significant figure in Exeter local history circles. Previously a software writer and founder of a data company, with skills in graphic design and photography, David founded and ran the *Exeter Memories* website for many years until his death and made it a unique and fantastically comprehensive resource of information about the history of the city. He also wrote a book, *Exeter Pubs*, which was published in 2014.

In his later years David lived near the flood relief channel in Exwick on the western fringes of the city. Until 2018 I also lived in the area, and I knew him a little as I was one of a small group of local residents who met occasionally to discuss and research the area's history. We sometimes met at David's house, decorated with James Ravilious prints and lined with books on historical and cultural subjects which went far beyond the boundaries of Exeter.

David had suffered kidney problems since an early age and had to undergo regular dialysis. He once told me that when he was a child he had not been expected to live into middle age, so the fact that he lived well beyond that, and created *Exeter Memories* in the process, is something for which all in the Exeter local history community can be truly grateful.

Brian Carpenter

2023

Upcoming Events

26
JAN

19:00 - 20:00

Whitbourne, Crout and Berry: Three Devonians in Early-Modern Newfoundland



8
FEB

19:30 PM - 21:00

The Dissolution of the Monasteries in Devon



7
MARCH

19:30 - 20:30

The Remarkable Pinwill Sisters



29
APRIL

10:00 - 15:00

Devon's Houses in the 1920s (with Devon Buildings Group)



10:30 - 12:30

Sources for Local History at The Box



9
MAY

18:00 - 19:00

Families under pressure: The Curreys & the Stitsons in Wembury and Plymouth



17
JUNE

10.45 - 15:30

Society Showcase: Way of the Wharves, Bideford



Historical Association joint event

MORE INFORMATION:

www.devonhistorysociety.org.uk



Online



In-person

