

AWARD WINNERS 2026

DEVON BOOK OF THE YEAR: WINNER. Baxter, Stephen, Crick, Julia. and Lewis, C.P., *Making Domesday: intelligent power in conquered England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press)

The fact that three eminent scholars have spent many years on this project leads one to expect something special and the DHS judging panel were not let down in their assumptions. This is a magisterial book which started as a project arising from the disbanding of the manuscript known as Exon Domesday for conservation and digitisation in 2011. Exon Domesday is one of the so called Domesday satellites. Widely regarded as working texts for south west counties rather than intended to be part of a book. The special value of this book is opening a wide window on the Domesday process. The extent of the research is breathtaking. Part 1 (chapters 1 to 11) offers the Exon text in forensic detail – recognising for example 27 different scribes heavily influenced by continental practice. Part 2 chapters 12 - 18 looks at the legal, administrative and personal aspects. So many Domesday studies look at the king downwards but this puts the emphasis on the clerks and the administrative perspective. It's a real tour de force relevant to all Domesday scholars whether in Devon or elsewhere. Sadly the joy of such an impressive work is diminished by the death of Professor Stephen Baxter in January of this year.

DEVON BOOK OF THE YEAR: HIGHLY COMMENDED. French, Henry, Baker, Leonard & Fyfe, Ralph, *The reclamation of Exmoor: rethinking the consequences of nineteenth-century landscape change* (Palgrave/Macmillan)

Our DHS President Henry French has worked impressively with two esteemed colleagues to examine and revise traditional views on 19th century landscape improvement on Exmoor. One of the distinctive features of the book is the way historical evidence is used alongside the palaeobotanical. There is an evaluative approach comparing ideologies regarding agrarian improvement with changing farming practices. The background is that in 1818 the Royal Forest of Exmoor was sold by the Crown to a midlands industrialist who embarked on a major reclamation scheme. Much of the evidence for the success or otherwise is now dated – the most prominent being Orwin's 1929 study of the Exmoor reclamation. The authors probe and refine these earlier interpretations in a meticulous and convincing way.

W G HOSKINS PRIZE: WINNER. Batten, Richard, *For King and Country: the role of patriotism in mobilisation in the First World War* (Barnsley: Pen and Sword History)

Despite its general title this largely explores the theme from a Devon perspective. It is very readable, full of interesting anecdotes but manages to combine scholarship, detail and

entertainment. Not all PhDs translate into such an excellent book. It looks at the various aspects of patriotism – who sets the tone, who resists and for what reasons. It demonstrates clearly there was no single approach to patriotism either from those encouraging it or those expected to respond to it. Devon like everywhere else had its context such as the attitudes of farmers, a preference for the navy, those who did not at first see the War as relevance to their isolated communities. Those encouraging patriotism engaged in a range of different tactics often trying to balance carrot and stick emphasising the moral, ideological and psychological – sometimes veering into the unacceptable such as a vendetta against German monks at Buckfast Abbey.

W G HOSKINS AWARD: HIGHLY COMMENDED: Clarkson, Alan, *The Tuckers of Coryton: a Kilmington dynasty* (Kilmington: the author)

Alan Clarkson has provided a penetrating narrative of the 200 year fortunes of the Tucker family of Coryton near Kilmington who once owned nearly 3000 acres of land largely across east Devon. Emerging as yeoman family from Tudor times the book meticulously traces their status as landed gentry from their base at Coryton, how they interacted with the local inhabitants and how they declined – a mix of factors extravagance, unfortunate marriages and poor financial decisions. Published through the Kilmington History Group this impressive book also a great deal of information also on that community.

Dissertation prize. This is open to any Devon area study but mostly submissions are from Exeter and Plymouth University.

ALICE SPENCE: MAGNATE LAWLESSNESS AND SEIGNEURIAL LORDSHIP IN 14TH AND 15 C DEVON: A CASE STUDY OF THE COURTENAY FAMILY

Looking at the paradox of the Courtenay family balancing their royal governance with their involvement in local disorder. It explores the power of overmighty subjects along with weak kingship includes the conflicts with the City of Exeter and Sir William Bonville. Draws on a good range of sources such as governmental, legal, local and chronicles. Violence seemed persistent as a strategy to maintain power. The Crown needed the Courteney family to enforce authority whilst the Courtenays needed the Crown to give it legitimacy. These are well explored in this excellent dissertation.