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October 1978

# The Devon Historian

17





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Robin Stanes was the last survivor (apart from the Chairman) of the officers who originally launched the SCDH and the *Devon Historian* back in 1970. Thanks to his hard work and gentle persuasion, the latter has grown from its inevitably rather tentative beginnings into the solid and valuable publication it is today. This was not easy: there was at first a policy directive that the magazine should not compete with others in publishing finished articles, but that it should concentrate on 'how to do it' — presumably for the benefit of other existing periodicals on Devon local history. This, as he says, proved unworkable. There were few such contributions, and an attempt to exclude everything else would have in effect hamstrung the *Devon Historian*. Instead, while continuing to provide information on sources and activities elsewhere, it has become a forum in which members may give others the benefit of their particular local studies — and so much the better. Comparison of No. 16 with its early predecessors shows how justified the change has been.

As quondam Secretary, I knew the hand-to-mouth situation in which he continued to work. It was never possible to build up a comforting supply of matter-in-hand for the future issues, yet he always managed, if by a pierhead jump, to produce the magazine on time. Once, indeed, this involved delivering it to my remote abode considerably after bedtime! His absence of flap in these circumstances was remarkable. I never knew him to show impatience or annoyance in carrying this burden through what must have been at times considerable frustration. As Secretary, I fear, I failed by far to match his imperturbability. Not only did he do the job well, but he did it for twice as long as the other two original officers.

He hands to his successor what is definitely a going concern, and future *Devon Historians* (and Devon historians) will owe him much.

R.R.S.

#### Post script

As Robin's successor I am benefiting from the fund of goodwill he built up and from the impetus given by his energy. I should point out that although he kindly gave my name as editor in No. 16, that issue was all his own work. May I assure readers that we are still interested in how-to-do-it articles. Perhaps someone could answer Mrs. Dix's request (see Correspondence) for advice on keeping records.

S.M.S.

Jeffrey Porter

The penny readings movement which gripped Victorian England in the third quarter of the nineteenth century had derived from Charles Knight's *Penny Magazine* which flourished between 1832 and 1846 and at its peak had a circulation of 200,000. It had been sponsored by the Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge to undermine the influence of the radical unstamped press and for that reason was condemned by William Cobbett and by the *Poor Man's Guardian*. The righteous *Penny Magazine* was succeeded by the salacious and scurrilous 'penny dreadfuls' which catered for the popular taste for cheap literature. Penny readings, the performance of extracts from popular and classical literature, had to steer a middle course between the needs to entertain and to instruct and ran the continued risk of being condemned as dull or frivolous. In Devon the penny readings 'movement' reached a peak in the mid-1860s and thereafter faded. They were seen as a way of passing the dull winter evenings between October and March by means of a weekly or fortnightly series of readings. The *Devon Weekly Times* between 1864 and 1867 shows that at least 35 towns and villages ran their series of penny readings\*.

Thomas Wright, in his book by 'A Journeyman', on *Some Habits and Customs of the Working Classes* (London, 1867) wrote that the penny readings movement was attractive to the working man because it did not suffer from an 'oppressive patronage' or from a 'cheap gentility'. In Devon the movement undoubtedly depended upon patronage and in some cases it may well have been oppressive. The initiative to hold a series of penny readings mainly came from the gentry and most often from the church.

At Bideford the proceedings were dominated by the Rev. E. Sergeant and two other clergy, Crediton had two rival readings sponsored by the vicar and the non-conformists, the vicar was aided by 'a committee of gentlemen desirous of improving the mental and moral condition of the people'. The initiative at Ashburton was taken by 'a gentleman who has recently taken up residence there' helped by the vicar, the Rev. C. Worthy and three other priests. The Rev. A.A. Hunt, the Rev. Dr. Cornish and W.R. Coleridge led the readings at Ottery St. Mary while Archdeacon Downall took the chair at Okehampton as did the rector, the Rev. J.F. Mackarness at Honiton and the Rev. F.C. Hingeston at Modbury. The series at Torrington was under the presidency of the Mayor and those at Axminster under Captain Barnard R.N. Vicars presided at Chagford (Rev. H.G. Hames), at Sidmouth, the Rev. H.G.J. Clements, and at the Girls National School at Bradninch the Rev. H. Leakey dominated. Silverton's readings were chaired by the Rev. H.F. Strangeways

\* Ashburton, Axminster, Bampton, Barnstaple, Bideford, Bishops Nympton, Black Torrington, Bradninch, Brixham, Budleigh Salterton, Chagford, Crediton, Dulverton, East Budleigh, Exeter, Exmouth, Great Torrington, Hatherleigh, Holsworthy, Honiton, Kingsteignton, Modbury, Morchard Bishop, Newton Abbot, Northleigh, Okehampton, Ottery St. Mary, Paignton, Sandford, Sidmouth, Silverton, South Molton, Tavistock, Teignmouth, Tiverton.

and those at Bishops Nympton were well supported by the vicar, the Rev. J. Thorne. There can, then, be no doubt that the penny readings movement in Devon was dependant upon middle class patronage for its creation and that this patronage came predominantly from the clergy.

This raised the possibility of denominational conflict and it arose in an acute form in Crediton. Crediton started its series in 1863. A committee had been formed to start a series of penny readings and this committee consisted of Church of England and dissenting Christians. Consequently the vicar, C.F. Smith refused to attend the meetings and the secretary of the committee, being the vicar's man refused to call meetings. In consequence one series was started under the leadership of the Revs. J. Taplin and J. Capper for the non-conformists. For these it was claimed by Taplin that many of the working class attended to secure 'the merging of all religious and political opinions, and feelings for one common object — the intellectual, social, and moral improvement of the working classes of the town'. They received 50 entries for a prize essay on either 'The advantages of popular readings' or 'The duty of humanity to animals'. The reporter to the **Devon Weekly Times** condemned the vicar's series as 'chiefly attended by the class of persons who do not require them', and the vicar had reserved seats at 3d. for the gentry. The newspaper reported in 1865 'What a pity it is that so much narrowness of mind should be exhibited in the name of religion'.

The subject matter to be read had to steer a path between the heavy-weight and the frivolous. A list of readings would mean little to us now as many of the novels and poets have settled into well deserved oblivion. Readers at Hatherleigh, for example, chose selections from Dean Alford's scenes from abroad and from the poems of Felicia Hemans. The vicar's series at Crediton preferred Shakespeare and Dickens, at Honiton Mr. J.D. Coleridge read from Wordsworth and Tennyson. The most certain way to keep the audience in regular attendance was to intersperse the readings with glees or music. Tavistock Mechanics' Institute had a band of 10 while Exeter Working Man's Society preferred 'entertainment on the English concertina'. Towns from Okehampton to Brixham provided glees and music. On one occasion in Crediton when music was not provided 'attendance was slack'. The provision of musical entertainment was not without its problems. Once at Honiton Miss Coleridge and Miss Mackarness played Beethoven's sonatas 'upon an instrument of the most execrable character' and 'some glees were also attempted under the direction of the Rev. H.K. Simcox'. The tone of the report implies that they were no more successful.

As well as the cultural and social aims of the readings there were more narrowly financial ends, to meet the necessities of struggling voluntary institutions. Crediton and Hatherleigh wanted funds for their Literary Institutes, Ottery to repair the church organ, Chagford to support a lending library and Bishops Nympton to form a parochial library. Axminster wished to support a new public reading room and Tiverton, after making a £26 surplus on the 1864-65 season gave £6 to the Atheneum and £20 to the Dispensary. Tavistock Mechanics Institute supported its band while Torrington Mutual

Improvement Society supported itself.

Financial success needed to be based on a good attendance at meetings. Two questions thus arise, how good was the attendance at penny readings and what class of people attended. The numbers involved could be considerable; at Ottery the 1864-65 series used a room in the town hall which was 'tolerably well filled' and 'quite a success', while 430 were present in Tiverton in December 1864 to take part in 'one of the most successful movements of which Tiverton has of date been able to boast'. Budleigh Salterton had 'a numerous company', Ashburton 'a crowded audience', Hatherleigh 'a good attendance', and Tavistock Mechanics Institute 'a large company'. At Modbury there was 'a well filled attentive audience', Chagford was 'crowded', and Black Torrington 'successful beyond expectations'. Honiton provided two series, 1d. readings in the national school room which attracted about 150, and in winter 1865-66 a ½d. series in the Golden Lion which was 'crowded to excess' and the following winter a further ½d. series in the Dolphin Assembly Rooms.

How many of those attending belonged to the gentry for whom penny readings had not been intended is hard to assess. Ashburton's readings were 'well attended not only by the labouring classes but also by the gentry' while East Budleigh had a respectable audience 'including the Prince of Wallachia' in January 1866. The vicar's series at Crediton continued to be numerically popular but 'most of the seats (were) reserved for the class for whom the readings were not intended'. At Silverton there attended 'the principal inhabitants as well as the poorer classes'.

Audiences could be critical about the suitability of the pieces presented to them. Those who wished to see the working classes seriously instructed might complain, as at Budleigh Salterton in January 1865, that 'some of the pieces selected were not of that useful and instructive character which could be desired; and the Committee of the Literary Institute respectively request gentlemen to endeavour to combine these essential points in their readings'. An even greater danger was boredom or incoherence. In 1865 the Rev. Mr. Sobey at Tiverton was reduced to rebuking part of his audience after 'experiencing considerable interruption and annoyance'. At Brixham 'The first reader', on one occasion, 'was perfectly unintelligible, and one or two others were not loud enough to be easily heard'. A meeting at Barnstaple Literary and Scientific Institution was for three weeks disrupted by 'brainless youngsters' some of whom had to be ejected and on the third occasion two policemen had to be called.

Crediton provides one of the best examples of discontent over the choice of readings, this being from one of the Rev. Taplin's series in January 1866. The **Devon Weekly Times's** correspondent reported that 'a piece was read by a lad from the grammar school — but was too fast and at times quite unintelligible' and suggested that 'There is many a working man who would come forward as readers if only taken by the hand or brought forward by the committee'. This prompted a letter from 'a working man' who complained of boredom and disorder, going on to say 'we had something about Roman tribunals, which none of the working men could make head or tail of. It was so

Robert Newton

unintelligible and long that more than half the people shut up their ears and gave vent to their tongues. Next came a mournful tale about a fellow that got drunk, which was too doleful and too long to be interesting. Then we had a young recruit, who galloped over the ground like a racer, and no one could overtake him or even see his subject. The people were thoroughly worn out; and, having a youthful inexperienced chairman, disorder prevailed to such an extent that though many wished to hear the last reader, who had hit upon a capital tale, few could hear so as to enjoy it'. The response to this letter was reported a week later by the editor, 'We have received a letter from the secretary, requesting us to omit hostile communications as they tend to injure the Penny Readings'.

Those sponsoring penny readings in the hope of civilising the poor might have come to the conclusions of Oscar Wilde, writing in December 1887, 'The poor are not to be fed upon facts. Even Shakespeare and the Pyramids are not sufficient; nor is there much use in giving them the results of culture unless we can also give them those conditions under which culture can be realised'.

#### Sources

**Devon Weekly Times**, 1864-67.

A Journeyman (Thomas Wright), **Some habits and customs of the Working Classes**, London, 1867.

Oscar Wilde, **Reviews**, London, 1908, from **Woman's World**, December, 1887.

J.F.C. Harrison, **Learning and Living 1790-1960**, 1961.

Brian Simon, **Studies in the history of education 1780-1870**, 1960.

To Macaulay the entry of the Prince of Orange into Exeter, in November, 1688 provided magnificent colour for one of the dramatic scenes of his epic. To E.A. Freeman, writing in the "Historic Towns" series in 1887, the events of 1688 marked "the end of the history of Exeter as a part of the kingdom of England, directly influencing the history of the kingdom". To the merchants who were members of the Chamber of Exeter the unexpected arrival of the Prince was a highly unwelcome invitation to assume without preparation a prominent role in a historical drama, its final act unwritten, and that too at a time when the activities of Jack Ketch conferred his name, *ex officio*, on future public executioners. For the Chamber the choice lay between the penalties of unsuccessful rebellion and, if it were successful, the possible triumph of Dissenters and fanatics, republicans and old Cromwellians.

"The great interest of the place", wrote the Earl of Bath, Lord Lieutenant, in 1688 "consists of Church men, and it has always been true to the Church and loyal to the King." The Chamber had been unimpeachably Anglican since the Restoration, Tory since the terms Whig and Tory came into popular use as party labels in about 1678. They had prudently stood aside from Monmouth's propagandist campaign of 1679 in the West Country and accordingly had received the thanks "most justly due to them for the regard they showed to his Majesty's honour."<sup>2</sup> They had subsequently petitioned for vigorous execution of the laws "against both Popish and fanatic Dissenters"<sup>3</sup>. They had supported Charles II's successful counter-attack against the Whigs after the Oxford Parliament of 1681 and in 1684 had surrendered their charter without demur.

The Chamber was an exclusive club. Its members tended to be wealthy merchants and grocers. They were elected for life and selected eligible candidates for vacancies. They formed a governing class often allied by marriage or ties of apprenticeship. Lesser businessmen, small shopkeepers and artisans remained outside their circle. Dissenters were excluded by law and by sentiment. The latter formed a substantial minority of the population, perhaps as much as one-quarter in 1687. They were prominent in the cloth industry and included men of substance, masters of the Company of Weavers, Tuckers and Shearmen, and grocers such as Jerome King, father of a lord chancellor. Inevitably Dissenters were Whigs in alliance with those denied access to Chamber circles, "the Merchants in general, the Dissenters and the Low Church"<sup>4</sup> who formed the unsuccessful opposition to the Tory candidates in the tumultuous general election of 1761. A similar alliance must have supported the Whig petition from Exeter in 1681 subscribed, according to a news-letter, "by about 4,000 hands"<sup>5</sup>, and formed the bulk of the crowds who flocked to acclaim the Prince of Orange in 1688.

It was to this opposition that James II appealed in 1687 when he launched his comprehensive campaign to pack with his supporters the corporations of the parliamentary boroughs and thus, it was hoped, secure an amenable



parliament. This purge, in contemporary phrase a regulation, involved a wholesale eviction of a traditional governing class and amounted to a social revolution. Charters were surrendered. Writs of *quo warranto* were issued against recalcitrants. The Regulators "settled fit and proper correspondents in each of those Counties, Corporations and Boroughs for all services relating to this affair, by whom we can in a short time be truly informed of any person or thing, and influence any election"<sup>6</sup>. On the basis of intelligence reports from these local agents the crown appointed the members of the governing bodies of the boroughs.

Exeter's charter had been surrendered to Charles II in 1684 and returned with a nominated Tory Chamber. In November, 1687 it was surrendered to James II. Fourteen members of the Chamber were removed and replaced by nominees, among them nine Dissenters. The new mayor, Thomas Jefford, was not a Dissenter, but though a wealthy man he had not been admitted to the circles of the Chamber. In March, 1688 the Chamber was again regulated. Those members who had survived the regulation of the previous November were now removed and further nominations made involving the appointment of the whole Chamber by the crown<sup>7</sup>. The recordership, like that of Barnstaple, was conferred on the second Duke of Albemarle, conveniently overseas as Governor of Jamaica. In Albemarle's absence the office devolved on the brilliant, but devious, Earl of Sunderland, Secretary of State and also one of the Regulators.

In June the local agents of the Regulators expressed themselves satisfied with Exeter. They reported that the Chamber proposed to choose the mayor, Thomas Jefford, and Sir Bartholemew Shower, as candidates for the general election, that both were "right", that is could be relied upon to support the crown, and that the Chamber would undoubtedly carry the election<sup>8</sup>. Shower was an Exonian by birth, the brother of a Dissenting minister and, moreover, one of the prosecuting counsel in the trial of the Seven Bishops. After the Revolution he was indeed elected for Exeter, this time as a Tory assuring the electorate of his devotion to the Church and his opposition to Occasional Conformity. In September there was still optimism; Jefford, by then knighted, and Shower, had "no doubt of carrying the Election, notwithstanding the opposition of the Bishop's party"<sup>9</sup>.

In the meantime the Earl of Bath was wringing his hands over the situation. His own influence was being undermined by the Regulators and their agents. Exeter was "miserably divided and distracted". For no offence and with no questions asked "the most substantial, rich, loyal citizens" had been turned out of office. They were now "domineered over by a packed Chamber of Dissenters, .... and the Sword, which was never known in the memory of man in this city, carried every Sunday before the Mayor in state to a conventicle"<sup>10</sup>.

There was some justification for this outraged tone. Twelve, half the members of the Chamber, were undoubtedly Dissenters: John Starr, Edmond Starr and Jerome King, grocers; John Pym, Thomas Crispin, Humphrey Bawden, Andrew Jeffery, John Boye and Hugh Bidwell, fullers and tuckers;

Joseph Mawditt and Robert Tristram, merchants; Anthony Mapowder, brewer. Three others, Thomas Atherton, Thomas Sampson and Isaac Savery may well have had Dissenting connections. In the business world they were solid men. Six had been, or would be, masters of the Company of Weavers, Tuckers and Shearmen. Socially and politically they were below the line.

In October, 1688 the king suddenly reversed his policy under the threat of imminent invasion. All mayors and other officers and members of corporations which had received their charters since 1679 were reinstated except those whose deeds of surrender had been enrolled or against whom judgements in *quo warranto* had been entered. Exeter's charter of 1684 was accordingly restored, and with it the predominantly Tory Chamber.

On Sunday, the 5th November, the Earl of Bath wrote a despatch to Sunderland's successor as Secretary of State<sup>11</sup>. The King's order-in-council restoring the old Chamber had arrived at Exeter late on the Saturday night. On the Sunday morning "the old loyal Civil Magistrates of this Place" sought the Lord Lieutenant's advice, which was "not to lose an hour, but to goe immediately to demand the Sword and Cap of Maintenance, and put themselves in the best Condition they could in so short a tyme, to come in a Body to the Cathedrall Church". Here they were reinstated in the presence of the Bishop, the Lord Lieutenant and other notables. "Thousands of the Citty expressing their Joy .... to see the Sword rescued from a Conventicle."

The Lord Lieutenant intended to spend the rest of that Sunday in the Guildhall re-establishing members of the Chamber in their offices and filling vacancies. In Torbay, the Prince of Orange was busy disembarking his army.

The Chamber cannot be blamed if they were under the impression that "good King Charles's golden days" had returned. In fact, on the 9th November, they were invited to associate themselves with rebellion by receiving the Prince of Orange in state when he entered the city that day. Their Lord Lieutenant was at Plymouth watching events. There was no local magnate ready to give a decisive lead as did the earls of Danby at York and Devonshire at Nottingham. The Chamber prudently declined a dangerous honour and left humbler citizens to welcome the Prince. It must have been with relief that they heard of the arrival of their Recorder, Sir Edward Seymour of Berry Pomeroy, also reinstated in his office, and in Macaulay's words "beyond comparison the foremost among the Tory gentlemen of England". To the Prince of Orange Seymour's arrival at Exeter signified the support of the Tory squires. For the Chamber it provided guidance from an experienced politician, a member of a class expected to lead in a political crisis and, like Seymour's own ancestor in 1552, to pay the penalty for failure. For twenty years Exeter was a fief in the Western empire of its Recorder "Tsar Seymskeye". He was returned for the city in six general elections and for the Convention of 1689. He nursed his constituency, lending money to the Chamber and giving advice on local affairs. At Exeter in November, 1688 Seymour organised the association of supporters of the Prince of Orange and he was appointed governor of the city when the

Prince began his eastward advance. It may be assumed that he gave the Chamber weighty advice in the crisis.

On the 22nd, the day after the Prince's departure, the Chamber met to organise its affairs. Ten members assembled including Christopher Bale and John Snell both of them to be associated with Seymour as Tory members for the city in subsequent parliamentary elections. Their colleagues included George Tothill, the sole member of the Chamber to welcome the Prince of Orange, and Edward Seaward, returned as a Whig in the momentous general election of 1695 when the Whigs captured both seats, and knighted in the following year. An important absentee was George Saffin, a former mayor and the only Exeter Tory sufficiently stern and unbending to refuse the oaths of allegiance and supremacy, amended for tender consciences, to William and Mary.

Seven members were elected to fill vacancies in November and three more in December. Inter-party unity was maintained by the election of the Tory Christopher Bale as mayor and Edward Seaward as sheriff. Then, on the 25th January, 1689, a succinct minute in the Act Book recorded that of the seven new members elected at the first formal meeting of the restored Chamber, on the 22nd November, five "for some reasons best known this house.... are all dismissed".

The reasons for dismissal from the Chamber were usually recorded. On the 21st September, 1690 for instance, George Saffin was "dismissed for refusing to take the oaths of allegiance and supremacy", and Robert Hutchins "being become *non compos mentis*". It is to be inferred that the minute of the 25th January, 1689, reflects political differences in the Chamber. Of the five dismissed members one, John Elwill, was a prominent Whig, knighted like Edward Seaward in the Whig victory honours of 1696, losing his place on the commission of the peace when Seymour purged the Devon magistracy in 1704, and receiving a baronetcy when the Whigs controlled the government in 1709. Of the others, the wealthy merchant John Bankes was son-in-law of Richard Crossing, mayor during the Commonwealth, and Nicholas Brooking was brother-in-law to Edward Seaward. The affiliations of two of the five, Christopher Mayne and George Pyle, remain elusive. The evidence is tenuous but it is possible that the Tories in the Chamber managed to oust Whig or Dissenting sympathisers; in London the fragility of the alliance between Whig and Tory was being demonstrated by opposing views on the status of James II.

Certainly the Chamber emerged from the crisis of 1687-1688 predominantly Tory, and so it remained until 1835. Non-conformists and Evangelicals fought old battles by new methods in the 1830s and briefly controlled the citadel of power. But in 1868 the *Western Times* complained that "The tone of the city, what is called its respectability, is predominantly Tory".

## Notes

The dates are given in the Old Style, ten days behind the Gregorian Calendar. According to continental reckoning the Prince of Orange landed on the 15th November. The year is taken as beginning on the 1st January.

1. *Cal. State Papers (Domestic)*, James II, vol. 2, pp.304-305, Bath to Sunderland, 9.10.1688.
2. *C.S.P.(Dom)*, Charles II, 1.9.1680-31.12.1691, p.9, Secretary Jenkins to the Bishop of Exeter, 7.9.1681.
3. *Ibid*, p.660.
4. Alexander Jenkins, *History and Description of the City of Exeter (1806)* p.208.
5. *C.S.P.(Dom)*, *op.cit.*, News-Letter 18.1.1681.
6. George Duckett, *Penal Laws and Test Act (1882)*, vol. 1, p.223.
7. Public Record Office, SP.44/337, Annexure to Charter of March, 1688.
8. Duckett, *op.cit.*, vol. 2, p.231.
9. *Ibid*, p.240.
10. *C.S.P.(Dom)*, James II, vol. 2, Bath to Sunderland, 9.10.1688.
11. British Library, ADD.MSS. 41805. Bath to Preston, 5.11.1688.
12. *Western Times*, 20.11.1868.

## BRUNEL AND TEIGNMOUTH

H.J. Trump

The main facts of the life and work of Isambard Kingdom Brunel are given in L.T.C. Rolt's excellent study, published in 1957, and in a more recent account by John Pudney, *Brunel and his World*. The story of Brunel's relationship with one Devon town, Teignmouth, illustrates some of the points made by these two biographers.

Brunel needed to win the support of Teignmouth people for 'the coast-ways route' of the South Devon Railway and he addressed 'a very numerous and highly respectable meeting' at the Public Rooms on 31 January, 1844. Experience had shown him, he explained, that 'it was necessary to carry a line through populous towns' and — for Teignmouth — this would be a particular advantage because 'the least possible injury would be done and the station would be placed in the very heart of the town'. Moreover, the deep cut through Teignmouth, partly tunnelled, appeared of advantage because it passed through a dense population and 'by the removal of houses there, creates a healthiness to the inhabitants ... by the free circulation of air which this occasions'. For Brunel, to whom human progress was largely determined by the application of scientific principles, there was no hypocrisy about this argument, but what the views were of those who lost their homes is not recorded. The 'highly respectable' meeting carried Brunel's motion for the coastal route unanimously and with acclamation.

Brunel may have sounded out local opinion before this public meeting and the correspondent of *Woolmer's Gazette*, 27 May, 1843, congratulated the town on visits from so distinguished a guest :

... the talented engineer, Mr. Brunel ... intends to sojourn awhile in this salubrious place. He daily takes the air on the salubrious walks around the Den, and has already derived benefit from the exhilarating effect of the sea breeze.

Brunel's visits encouraged him to stay near Teignmouth and he planned to build a house at Watcombe, not far from the Ness. He negotiated with local solicitors, Tozer, Mackenzie and Co., but then changed his mind before the house was completed. Apparently the additional land which he needed for privacy would have been too expensive and he agreed with the landowner that it could be sold more profitably as a building site.

Brunel's relationship with Tozer, Mackenzie and Co., a firm which still exists, appears to have been a long and intimate one. It was typical of the friendly associations he developed with those he employed and those whose services he engaged. Fully occupied as he was, Brunel found time, for example, to help one of his contractor's foremen, William Cruickshank, whose work had ended. Cruickshank applied for the post of Surveyor to the Teignmouth Improvement Commissioners and Brunel's testimonial won him the job; some years later when Cruickshank apparently quarrelled with his new employers, Brunel was not above writing a second testimonial for a

similar post in Hastings. Occasionally it seems that local people took advantage of a big name and then Brunel lost patience with them. Parmenius Pearse of Kingsteignton, for example, wrote to ask a favour for a friend and Brunel replied somewhat tartly: 'There are 100 applicants for every crumb that falls from the scanty meals of railway employers.'

Perhaps the clearest picture of Brunel is obtained through his correspondence with two Teignmouth people who played a significant part in national as well as local affairs — Captain Thomas Spratt and George Hennet.

Captain Spratt was a local boy who had made a career in the Far East as a marine surveyor. When he returned to Teignmouth he sought to benefit his native town by giving advice on improving the harbour which had long been plagued by a dangerous and shifting bar. In the light of his long experience, Spratt put forward plans which would have the dual advantage of stabilising the entrance channel and extending the promenade; since there was some local scepticism and concern about the cost, Captain Spratt enlisted the support of Brunel. It was readily forthcoming because Brunel considered that the Port of Teignmouth was 'of great value to the South Devon Railway' and he respected the experience of his fellow engineer. 'I have never read' wrote Brunel of Captain Spratt's *Investigation into the Movements of Teignmouth Bar*, 'a more sensible, concise and practical discussion of such a subject'. While modestly disclaiming any specialist knowledge of marine surveying, Brunel pointed out that it was desirable to find out 'the exact quality of the materials forming the shifting bar so as to determine as far as possible with certainty their origin'. Experts from Wallingford Research Station and elsewhere have recently followed this advice. Brunel's further comment — that 'whatever is done should be done very gradually' — has always had the backing of those with local knowledge and his third suggestion — that 'it is possible that some works on the Ness shore would be desirable in addition' — was acted upon many years later and may be in need of further implementation now. This matter of Teignmouth harbour bears witness to Brunel's wide-ranging genius and his modest readiness to work with others less gifted than himself.

George Hennet, unlike Captain Spratt, was not a local boy but he made Teignmouth one of the centres of his multifarious activities. For reasons which are not clear, Hennet developed a particular attachment to Teignmouth and promoted the welfare of the town and harbour by giving strong support to the long drawn-out battle for independence from Exeter in 1852-53. He was the chief speaker at the Independence celebrations and declared that if Teignmouth people 'would but unanimously put their shoulders to the wheel, their exports and imports ... should not be in tens of thousands of tons, nor in forty thousands of tons, but in four hundred thousand tons a year' — a forecast finally achieved in the 1970s.

Hennet's genius is comparable to Brunel's though it was of an entrepreneurial rather than an inventive kind. Described in an official document as 'railway contractor, shipowner, engineer, timber merchant, limeburner,



coal merchant, dealer and chapman', Hennet enjoyed a close association with Brunel in the first category. Trust and confidence developed early on and in March 1839 Brunel wrote to an impatient Director:

considering that [the agreement] was on a Friday, the Monday following is not very late for Hennet proceeding on your work.

In August, 1842 he told the Chairman of a company in some difficulty :

I have certified Mr. Hennet's account ... an agreed price — besides which it is, as I can assure the Directors, a fair price and as low as we can procure.

It was a further sign of confidence when Brunel asked Hennet to spy on the activities of a rival company — 'Can you set anybody on the scent?' [in a village near Gloucester].

When Brunel had his own difficulties to contend with, he occasionally sounds a plaintive note. 'Townshend tells me', he wrote in November 1840:

that he has not received a section of the line [for the Bristol and Gloucester Railway] — how is this? If it is really the case I shall be exceedingly angry and when you next require assistance you must not expect it at my hands as it seems I cannot depend upon you.

In the same year Brunel was upset when Hennet reported to the company Directors, rather than to him as Engineer. But for this breach of professional etiquette he blamed the Directors at least as much as Hennet :

It really must bear arguing against that a Contractor should be allowed, still less asked, to send in a report.

Despite such tiffs now and then, the relationship between Hennet and Brunel remained one of mutual understanding and assistance as Hennet moved on from the Gloucester-Bristol area to the south-west. Hennet's enterprise was particularly helpful because he followed up Brunel's view that the Port of Teignmouth was 'of great value to the South Devon Railway' by building a connection from the main line to the Old Quay close by. Among other benefits, this doubled coal imports in one year and provided additional freight traffic as far as Brent in one direction and Cullompton in the other.

Hennet's business operations stretched far beyond Teignmouth and landed him in trouble when speculation was rife in the early 1850s. Brunel offered support by acting as arbitrator to recover a business debt and by recommending Hennet as contractor for various jobs, including a cast-iron monument solicited by the Chairman of the South Devon Railway; when work had to be suspended on Clifton Suspension Bridge in 1851 Brunel tried to use his good offices to arrange a deal advantageous both to the Trustees and to Hennet. Despite this assistance, Hennet went bankrupt towards the end of 1853 for £350,000. Even then Brunel did not give up hope of rehabilitation. He made enquiries in December, 1856 as to 'what view of Hennet is taken by Bristol public opinion' and, apparently receiving satisfactory assurances, wrote to the Directors of the Bristol and South Wales Railway recommending Hennet as a contractor. It was too late. On 30 April, 1857

a correspondent in the *Exeter Plying Post* reported that George Hennet had died in London and that Teignmouth had lost 'one of her warmest and best friends'. Brunel's conscientious concern for his old partner — typical of his generosity towards all who worked with him — had been unavailing.



*The sailing vessel is alongside George Hennet's Old Quay and the steamer is unloading to railway trucks at a quay extension built later.*

### Sources

Brunel's correspondence, from which these quotations are taken, is in the University of Bristol Library (11 vols.); a very useful precis of each letter has been provided by Mr. G.E. Maby, Keeper of the Special Collections. Some interesting facts concerning Brunel's association with Teignmouth are in a series of articles by Mr. A.G. Avent in *Teignmouth Post and Gazette* (Feb.-March, 1978).

Captain Spratt's *Investigations into the Movements of Teignmouth Bar* is in the Library of the Devon & Exeter Institution.

George Hennet's bankruptcy proceedings are in Bankruptcy Order Book B1, P.R.O. Does any reader of *The Devon Historian* know of other first-hand evidence on this somewhat shadowy figure?

## THE 1569 MUSTER ROLL: NOTES AND QUERIES

R.R. Sellman

The preservation of the 1569 Muster Roll for Devon (less the gaps left by the obstinate insistence of tinnars — somehow contriving to include all Plymouth — on being mustered separately under the Lord Warden of the Stannaries) is particularly fortunate, since it comes at a time when English military methods and equipment were beginning to adapt to the changes which had already revolutionised continental warfare. The traditional bows and bills were at last giving way to the handgun (arquebus, caliver, and shortly the heavier and more effective musket) and the 15-16 foot pike; but at this point there were still (in Devon) more archers than gunners, and considerably more bills than pikes.

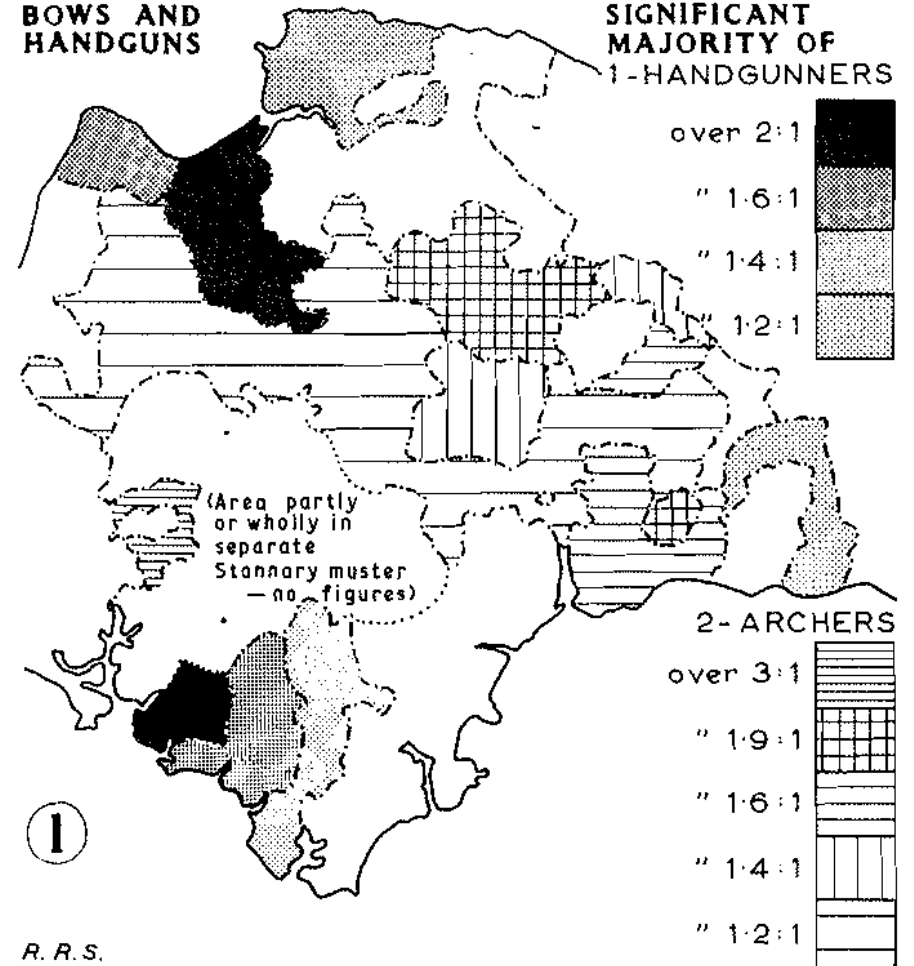
There is no need here to labour the significance of the change. The longbow had lost much of its earlier effectiveness, through neglect of the lengthy training needed to acquire the strength to pull it and the skill to aim for the parabolic flight and windage of the arrow, while the handgun, with its point-blank aim, required little of either. The pike was far superior to the bill both in defence and attack, given the training and discipline to use it in close formation; and the handgun, with its slow rate of fire, also required discipline for an orderly succession of firing and reloading by ranks, and the combination of gunners with pikemen for mutual protection. Later in the reign the new military facts of life were to be learned by expeditionary forces in conflict with Spanish experts in the Netherlands; but whether the county militia mustered at home ever had sufficient training to use the new weapons effectively may be doubted. Developments at the outbreak of the Civil War would, apart from the London Trained Bands, imply the negative.

Analysis of the 1569 figures for Devon — as far as they go — shows considerable, and sometimes wide, local discrepancies in the replacement of old weapons by new. The early adoption of handguns appears clearly in two areas — the South-West and the North-West — and is particularly marked in some towns. Plympton had 8, and Barnstaple 6, gunners to every archer, Kingsbridge 3½, Dartmouth 3, Braunton 2¾, Ashburton 2½, and Hatherleigh, Axminster, Paignton all over 2. But Exeter, perhaps surprisingly, showed no significant difference in its bow/gun (or pike/bill) ratio; and Tavistock mustered 4½ times as many archers, Cullompton twice as many, and Tiverton, Bampton, and Bideford/Northam all more archers than gunners.

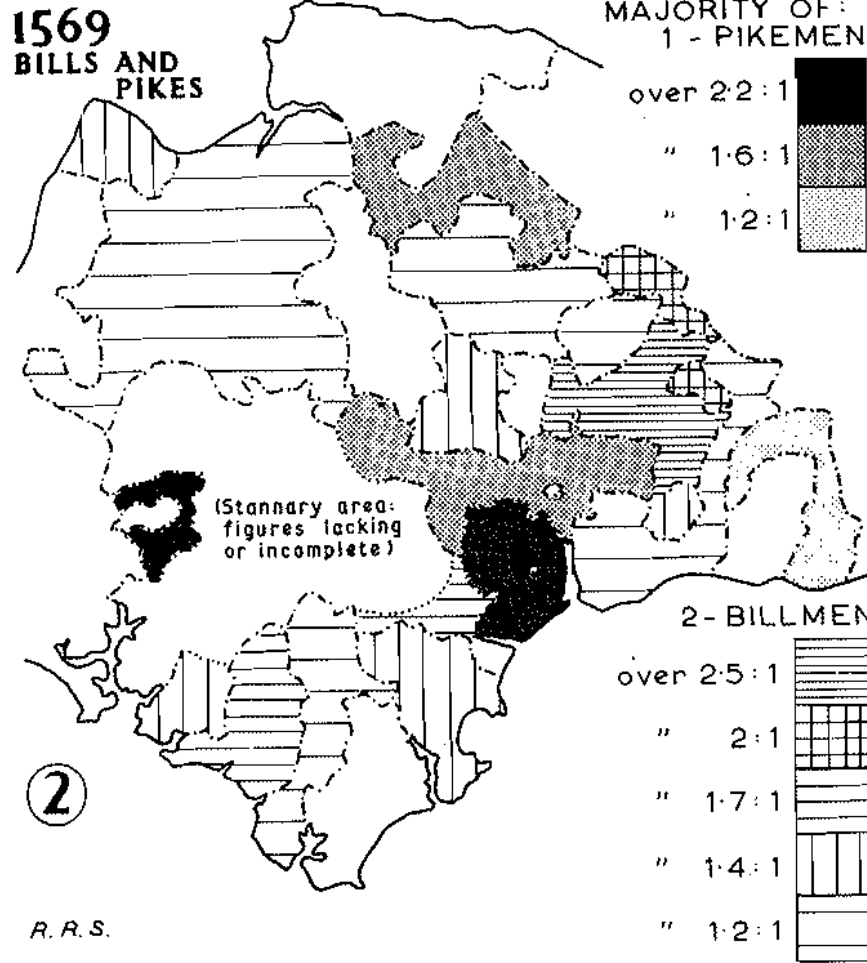
Those areas to the fore in introducing the new missile weapons were markedly **not** (with the minor exception of Axminster Hundred) those earliest in changing from bills to pikes; and nor were the towns ahead in this with the not very striking exceptions of Teignmouth (26 pikes to 9 bills — and no archers at all), South Molton (36:22) and Tavistock (50:24). Most progress in this respect was made in the 'red soil' district around (but not in) Exeter, in the small Tavistock Hundred which was the slowest in eliminating bows, and, perhaps surprisingly, in the Hundred of South Molton.

Is there an explanation, or are these contrasts merely fortuitous? Who decided whether individual militiamen of a particular locality were to be gunners rather than archers, pikemen rather than billmen — before the bow was finally discarded by central order in 1595? Perhaps someone more expert would provide enlightenment.

## THE 1569 MUSTER ROLL: BY HUNDREDS BOWS AND HANDGUNS



Peter J. Hunt



Local history is rather more about the ordinary man, whether relatively rich or poor, pursuing his daily labour and enjoying his pastimes and humdrum existence, than the national figure however prominent his part in national affairs. Most of us are aware of the grand houses, the writings of the educated and the works of art left by the important and wealthy, but only in more recent years have we looked at the enormous number of ordinary houses and cottages, the implements of trade and whatever relics remain of the legion of humble folk which complement the inheritance from the rich.

The most important and conspicuous part of the heritage left from other times is embodied in what is broadly termed vernacular architecture: the houses, factories, bridges, barns, walls and monuments which together record not only local building techniques, but the fashions and needs of different ages. Sometimes a sequence of building styles can be clearly found in a single building and by studying it, and possibly the inventory of the possessions of those who lived there, a more accurate and vivid understanding of them can be acquired. Sometimes only one or two families have lived in a property over hundreds of years, which in itself is likely to suggest acumen and a stable society.

If it is accepted that the homes of our forbears are going to provide us with clues about their attitudes, wealth and technical skills, then the materials will directly reflect the limitations within which they worked. Most buildings were built of local materials put together by local craftsmen in the latest and best way known to them. There were no architects and there was no Architects Institution until the mid-nineteenth century, and until then it was the local builder and surveyor whose artistry and ability ensured that a building was serviceable and attractive. Without doubt the design of a building was always intended to be attractive, but today the quaint old fashioned facades, and the patina of age, endow them with as much beauty and interest as the original design.

In medieval times the local carpenters would have constructed the frames, and the plank and muntin partitions would often have been prefabricated off the site and reassembled on it. Sometimes one can see the carpenters' numbers carved on them to ensure that a dozy journeyman did not put them together wrongly, similarly the cruck frames were marked, and the building of a house would become a community project with villagers helping to pull the frames into place. The building tradition in the Devon countryside included the use of various kinds of crucks which are shaped, when placed together, like a wishbone and form the principal beams and frame of many 15th, 16th and 17th century Devonshire farmhouses. As early as the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries there seems to have been a good understanding of building techniques and, apparently, a suitably organised society to produce buildings that delight the eye today. The investment needed to build a relatively small farmhouse must have been substantial.

Often it was used to good effect and provided a home for centuries, and for a local historian the house provides the most permanent of records which, taken with surviving inventories made at the time of the death of their owners, helps him to visualise the period.

Two remarkable Dartmoor farmhouses illustrate how buildings may survive and still keep their original layout which eloquently tells of the needs of long ago. The first is Sanders at Lettaford, built with massive granite blocks, and until recently remaining largely untouched for some 400-500 years with the house and shippon, with its central drainage gulley, separated by a passage. This remarkable building clearly shows the very basic way in which the Dartmoor farmer shared the same roof with his beasts, and he was no doubt thankful that he could avoid the cold wintry winds by merely crossing the passage to visit his animals, animals that used the same entry as the farmer before entering the shippon. Hill at Christow still retains its open hall, a relic from its sixteenth century origin. Certainly it must have been the practice for the family and perhaps servants to cluster about the central hearth, living no doubt the traditional life of peasantry, rising shortly after daybreak and going to bed at dusk.

The property that has lasted for 500 years without much change, except in its furnishings, is an exception to the rule. Many more are like Rock Farmhouse, which has recently become a public house at the Stags Head, Filleigh, in North Devon. When I visited the building some years ago, successive changes and additions to the original medieval hall house had left a puzzle to interpret. Clearly the original house had been a hall house and probably during Elizabethan times it had been either entirely or partially ceiled in, turning the hall, which had stretched up loftily to the roof space, into two stories providing extra accommodation without the need for an additional wing. Equally evident was a further phase of building which runs parallel to the narrow country lane at right-angles to the original property. This addition included a main hall with a fine massive external chimney stack, either added at a later date or, more likely, built at the same time. A barn, including a shippon with storage space for hay above, was separated from the house by a cross-passage, very reminiscent of the Dartmoor longhouse. The whole property had been extensively modernised in Victorian times, and a late-nineteenth century extension added in stone and slate, in contrast to the thatched and plastered earlier parts. There were of course, the inevitable sheds and lean-tos to provide a milking parlour etc.

The boldness of this nineteenth century modernisation and thoroughness of restoration at this time, which paid no heed to the inconvenient charm of the earlier building, is entirely in the spirit of building tradition. That which was useful was retained; no attempt was made to change the stairs, the thatch or even the basic form of the building - it would in any event probably have been too expensive, but privacy and light were created. New windows replaced what were no doubt earlier ones, some probably as minute as the one exposed as a feature in the outside wall of what is now the Stags Head Public House. Corridors between the bedrooms,

rather than having one bedroom opening into another, had been provided together with new cupboards and doors. Much of what was there before has been altered by the latest recent building projects, but it is satisfactory to note that, whilst it has been a thorough conversion, it has retained many of the earlier interesting features.

Some buildings like Rock Farmhouse are more intriguing because of the way in which they have changed leaving traces of earlier ways of life and traditions of building, and providing a puzzle to be unravelled, rather than a clear statement of an attitude of mind. The elegance and opulence of the sixteenth and seventeenth century merchants of Totnes is well revealed by the magnificence of their building; none less than the High Street home of Nicholas Ball, with his initials and the date, 1585 emblazoned on the front. Many of the town's Elizabethan houses have some fine plasterwork ceilings, jettied fronts and traditional local slate hanging. These houses speak of wealth and trade, of an arrogance matched only in later Victorian buildings, and a feeling for beauty. Leechwell at the edge of medieval Totnes, traditionally a lepers well, hints at the all pervading poverty and despair that contrasted so greatly with the opulent merchants' lives. Near the quay at Warland there are one or two properties, neatly and pleasantly restored, but once, no doubt, a contrast in squalor to the High Street and Fore Street properties nearby. This contrast of fortunes can be readily understood if one reads Pepys' Diary, where the author relates in a sad way, that he had sent down an orange to a sailor who had been dying of starvation in the courtyard during the past three days.

Combe Park is another house which clearly states an attitude of mind and, indeed, it is a remarkable survival of its period, just as much so as Hill, Christow, and Sanders, Lettaford, already mentioned. This early-seventeenth century brick and slate building is hidden within its own valley near Broadwoodwidge, amongst woodland and in an area of cold yellow clay. It is a remarkable house because it is evidently built of local bricks and once had much larger local slates than the nineteenth century ones that have replaced them, and can be dated almost exactly to 1700. (The first brick dwelling house in Devon to be still in use in Pinbrook House of 1679.) It was, therefore, a forerunner of the generally later brick tradition in Devon and, furthermore, originally had a five-window front. On inspection, it is evident that the front with its sash windows and spacious rooms with moulded ceilings and cupboards, contrasts severely with the back of the house with its mullioned windows (traditional to the seventeenth century rather than the sash windows of the eighteenth century), and its plain door without a porch unlike the front. Also all the service rooms and the servants' and, possibly, the children's rooms are at the back of the house and these are very plain and bare.

Possibly the house is a statement of a master/servant relationship, but possibly merely of snobbish pretence, so that the necessary elegant and modern front contrasts a little with the less elegant and plain back. The house has seven of its windows blocked with very similar brick to those originally used. Indeed, it looks almost as though, as soon as the property was



completed, the windows were blocked. In 1699 a window tax was introduced which resulted in this kind of alteration in many houses. The roof space incorporates an elbow cruck to avoid a chimney, but generally does not use cruck beams, so that it seems likely that the building was constructed at a time when they were still in vogue elsewhere. It may reasonably be argued that the house was built just before the William and Mary window tax, and reflects an immediate reaction against this imposition by an owner slightly impoverished by extravagantly building such a fine house, possibly to impress his friends and neighbours.

Perhaps the excellent set of primarily nineteenth century farm buildings, of cob and thatch and local stone rubble and corrugated iron of a less traditional value, indicates a changing emphasis by a later owner away from the pretentiousness of the first one. On the other hand it might not, but the magnificent stone cider trough and press remain pertinent reminders of the traditional importance of cider as part of the farmworker's wage as well as his rights. Without the two acre cider orchard many farms would not have functioned; no wonder a tax on cider introduced in 1763 led to rioting. The remains of a water mill and a roundhouse, used to shelter horses as they trundled round and round, and working farm machinery are also evocative of different times and attitudes captured by these crumbling buildings and rusting machinery.

Sometimes a building however humble may have a special place in local or even national history, and could still be easily recognised if visited by the ghosts of the actors in some past drama. Without too much imagination it is possible to recreate and understand the event better by seeing the building. Sampford Courtenay Church House is one such building, set in the centre of this beautiful village, which is skirted by the Bow to Hatherleigh road. Curiously, whilst the village has a magnificent granite church and a good many attractive whitewashed cob and thatched cottages lining its sloping streets, the streets, the Church House looks rather unimposing, built of stone, slate and some tiles, looking very much like many other Victorian buildings. Indeed the Victorians did a good job in restoring it and, only when one climbs the ancient granite steps from the cobbled edge of the street and enters the upper room, is it evident that the external appearance belies the basic medieval hall, typical of Devon church houses, that remains inside. Cruck roof beams divide the large open hall into five bays and it still retains the original oak furniture. There is a twenty foot table fastened to the original floor, with oak forms on each side, still where they were in 1500. At this table, the Prayer Book Rebellion began on Whit Monday 1549 and, on the steps outside, a farmworker called Lethbridge struck down William Hellyons with a bill hook, and there he was murdered by the angry mob.

Hellyons was one of the local gentry who tactlessly rebuked the villagers for not accepting Henry VIII's new prayer book. Ten days later the Rebellion had largely been quelled by Lord Russell, who hunted down the last of the rebellious farmers and labourers who fought their last stand through the streets of Sampford Courtenay. Even the streets had the same pattern as they

do today, although they were doubtless muddy and ill-made then. Not many humble buildings can be associated with such momentous deeds.

Perhaps an interesting commentary on society has been how the needy have been cared for. Often enough their own families have looked after the old and the lame, but well-meaning and sometimes pious folk (possibly remembering the 'hereafter') have given, built or provided almshouses to commemorate the life of someone. Almshouses have a special place in vernacular building and span the centuries, although it is those of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries and Victorian time that are most in evidence in Devon. Often, like the Moretonhampstead almshouses built of granite and arcaded in 1637, or the Penrose almshouses of 1624 at Barnstaple, they are attractive buildings and remain in use. Sometimes new, but appropriate, uses have to be found for them, such as the Wynards Almshouses in Exeter, now used to house several welfare organisations.

The almshouses often seem to have been left to local conscience to provide and are on a homely scale, but the old Royal Devon and Exeter Hospital in Southernhay, Exeter, is a magnificent building and was completed in 1742. This was the result of the enthusiastic fund raising of Dean Clark, and was one of the earliest provincial hospitals.

Equally important in social terms is the local gaol. Legend has it that a rather solid-looking barn next to Wortham Manor, a magnificently restored sixteenth century building in West Devon, was the local gaol. Since the house is extremely isolated, one wonders why such a facility was needed, or if it was ever such a thing. It needs a social historian to unravel this puzzle. Lydford gaol, where offenders against the stannary laws received rough justice, has largely disappeared, but Tiverton's gaol, built in 1846 as a debtors' prison, remains to this day and, in spite of the one time



*Old Police Station and Debtors' Prison at Tiverton in process of restoration by the Devon Historic Buildings Trust.*

possibility of demolition, should receive a reprieve through the work of the Devon Historic Buildings Trust, and at least retain the imposing front block and high surrounding wall. Unfortunately, the cells with their small windows and solid wooden doors, studded with enormous nails, will be lost.

One aspect I have not tried to discuss, but which still further helps us to understand past times, is the various artefacts attached to houses or grafted onto them. The covered well and the painted wooden screens and bee bowls are all important as social commentaries. The houses of Devon are treasure houses for the local historian, if he understands them.

I have suggested that many of the old buildings we see in Devon are as important for their silent commentary on a gradually changing society, as for their beauty and their interesting construction or furnishings. It is, nevertheless, desirable to recognise all these aspects and to enjoy them as an important aid to understand the past and to recognise what we are seeing and what it means in human terms.

**Editors note:** A recently published booklet, "Devon Traditional Buildings" includes nine articles related to the gradual evolution of building in Devon, with a Foreword by Professor W.G. Hoskins, edited by Mr. P. Beacham of the Devon County Planning Department's conservation section. Available from the Devon and Exeter Institution, Planning Department, County Hall and local booksellers — Price £1.50.

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## CONFERENCES

The AGM of the Standing Conference was held at the University of Exeter on 13th May.

In the morning Mr. Crispin Gill spoke on 'Turnpikes of Devon'.

After the formal business of the afternoon, two films were shown 'The mill at Tipton St. John', made by students of Plymouth College of Art (may be hired from Department of Economic History, University of Exeter, fee £5) and 'Devon Heritage' (may be hired from Devon Conservation Forum, fee £3 + postage).

The Autumn conference will take place at Torrington on 11th November, details are enclosed with this issue.

The Spring conference will be held at Cullompton on 4th March 1979.

## PETER KROPOTKIN ON DEVON AGRICULTURE

Jeffrey Porter

Four years after he had finally settled in this country the famous Russian anarchist Prince Peter Kropotkin visited Devon. In 1890 he stayed in South Devon and lectured in Plymouth. <sup>1</sup> At that time he was writing a series of articles for *The Nineteenth Century* <sup>2</sup> and amongst his preoccupations was the state of agriculture in Britain. Kropotkin particularly wished to see Britain self-sufficient in grains and foodstuffs and his comments on Devon's agriculture have to be understood in the context of this concern. The original articles did not contain reference to Devon but when they were published in an expanded form as that classic anarchist text **Fields, factories and workshops** in 1898 Kropotkin incorporated his views on Devonshire in 1890:

My heart simply ached when I saw the state in which land is kept in South Devon, and when I learned to know what 'permanent pasture' means. Field after field is covered with nothing but grass, three inches high, and thistles in profusion. Twenty, thirty such fields can be seen at one glance from the top of every hill; and thousands of acres are in that state, notwithstanding that the grandfathers of the present generation have devoted a formidable amount of labour to the clearing of that land from the stones, to fencing it, roughly draining it and the like. In every direction I could see abandoned cottages and orchards going to ruin. A whole population has disappeared and even its last vestiges must disappear if things continue to go on as they have gone. And this takes place in a part of the country endowed with a most fertile soil and possessed of a climate that is certainly more congenial than the climate of Jersey in spring and early summer — a land upon which even the poorest cottagers occasionally raise potatoes as early as the first half of May. But how can the land be cultivated when there is nobody to cultivate it? 'We have fields; men go by, but never go in', an old labourer said to me; and so it is in reality.

In a footnote Kropotkin went on to add, 'Round the small hamlet where I stayed for two summers, there were: one farm, 370 acres, four labourers and two boys; another about 300 acres, two men and two boys; a third 800 acres, five men only and probably as many boys. In truth, the problem of cultivating the land with the least number of men has been solved in this spot by not cultivating as much as two-thirds of it.'

He denounced in bitter terms the decline in British agriculture, 'The cause of this general downward movement is self-evident. It is the desertion, the abandonment of the land. Each crop requiring human labour has had its area reduced; almost one-half of the agricultural labourers have been sent away since 1861 to reinforce the ranks of the unemployed in the cities so that far from being over-populated, the fields of Britain are starved of human labour, as James Caird used to say. The British nation does not work on her soil; she is prevented from doing so; and the would-be economists complain that the soil will not nourish its inhabitants!'.<sup>4</sup>

By the time of the publication of the 1912 edition British agriculture had made a modest recovery from the distress of 1890 and Kropotkin saw

some reason for optimism in the changes taking place, though they in no way met his basic desires, and he added to his footnote, "Since these lines were written, in 1890, a movement in favour of intensive market-gardening has begun in this country, and I read in November, 1909, that they were selling at the Covent Garden market asparagus that had been grown in South Devon in November. They begin also to grow early potatoes in Cornwall and Devon. Formerly, nobody thought of utilising this rich soil and warm climate for growing early vegetables."<sup>5</sup>

1. George Woodcock and Ivan Avakumovic, **The Anarchist Prince**, London, 1950, pp. 230, 236.
2. See in particular "The coming age of plenty", **The Nineteenth Century**, XXIII, 1888, pp. 817-37. The series of articles ran from 1888-91.
3. Peter Kropotkin, **Fields, factories and workshops**, London, 1898, pp. 48-49.
4. 1912 edition, p. 90.
5. 1912 edition, p. 94.

## Standing Conference for Local History

### Information for local historians:

1. Directory of national organisations. 1978. 40p
2. Recognisable qualifications in local history. 1977. 30p
3. Local history societies in England and Wales. 1978. 65p

Obtainable from SCLH, 26 Bedford Square, London, WC1B 3HU.

Prices include postage. Cheques payable to National Council of Social Service.

## THE PAROCHIAL REGISTERS AND RECORDS MEASURE 1978

**Margery M. Rowe**

Head of Record Services, Devon Record Office.

This Measure, which comes into force on 1st January 1979, was mentioned briefly at the last A.G.M. of the the Standing Conference for Devon History, but it was thought that a note on its implications for Devon might be useful for those members not at that meeting. Briefly, it deals with the future custody of registers and other parish documents and with the inspection of more modern parochial registers and records left "in parochial custody" every six years. Section 10 states that all parish registers and records, if more than 100 years old and not still open for entries, shall be deposited in the Diocesan Record Office (in the case of the Exeter Diocese this means the Devon Record Office), unless specific exemption is obtained from the Bishop. A duty is also imposed on the Bishop to operate a system of regular statutory inspections of parish records once in every sixth year. As records become older and eventually qualify for compulsory deposit in the Diocesan record office, it will be for the Bishop's nominee who carries out the next inspection to see that they are deposited, or if exempted from deposit, cared for in accordance with Schedule 2 of the Measure. This Schedule specifies that the documents are to be kept in the Church and in a fire-proof safe. The records are to be inspected weekly and temperature and humidity readings taken.

I have discussed the implementation of the Measure with the Diocesan Registrar and we are agreed that incumbents and P.C.C.'s should be encouraged to deposit their older parish records with the Record Office as soon as possible so that the system of regular inspections of the records less than 100 years old, which is to be undertaken by Record Office Staff, can proceed as smoothly and quickly as possible after 1st January 1979. A questionnaire has been sent to every Devon parish and replies are now coming in. At the moment the Devon Record Office holds registers from approximately 300 parishes in Devon and parish documents from about the same number, not necessarily the same ones that have deposited registers. I am expecting that the records of about 150 further parishes will be deposited as a result of the Measure.

The study of genealogy is increasing to such an extent that some incumbents will be pleased to hand over the duty of making parish registers available to searchers, to the Record Office. In other parishes there will be regret that the older records are not so readily available for local people to use. Yet no-one can deny that there have been losses from parishes of these records and most archivists can produce "horror stories" of the conditions under which some records are kept. I feel that this present piece of legislation has come about because public opinion has at last become conscious of the necessity to preserve records for future generations and make enactments for this purpose. As historians we are aware of the value of these local records: let us also give them the best chance of survival we can.

**THE DEVON CLOTH INDUSTRY IN THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY: SUN FIRE OFFICE INVENTORIES OF MERCHANTS' AND MANUFACTURERS' PROPERTY, 1726-1770**, edited with an introduction by Stanley D. Chapman. Devon and Cornwall Record Society, New Series, vol. 23, 1978, xxvi + 159 pp. Assistant Secretary, Devon and Exeter Institution, 7 The Close, Exeter, Members £2.

Of the group of business records which have become available in recent years, one of the most rewarding for the historian is insurance policies, of which the best collection available to the public is that of the Sun Fire Insurance Office, now deposited in the Guildhall Library, London. These have begun to be used by historians. The Devon inventories are numerous because the sequence of disastrous fires which swept through Devon clothing towns in the eighteenth century - and notably Honiton and Tiverton - served to impress on local inhabitants the wisdom of insuring their property. Now Stanley Chapman, Pasold Reader in Textile History in the University of Nottingham, has analysed a selection of these inventories of properties insured by clothiers, fullers, sergemakers, woolstaplers and yarn jobbers for the period 1726-1770 to give a picture of the Devon cloth industry in the middle of the eighteenth century. Over fifty Devon towns and villages were involved, with Exeter, Crediton, Cullompton and Tiverton as the most important centres while five places contained only yarn jobbers. 'Weavers, woolcombers, hosiers, and mercers are omitted', Dr. Chapman states, 'because the numbers are much smaller (and therefore less representative) and because these policies seldom contain any detail about manufacturing'.

In his introduction, Dr. Chapman shows how these inventories provided information about the buildings involved - in some cases naming the material from which they were constructed - about the machinery installed surprisingly he notes there were only fifteen fulling mills - and about the stocks held. He does not, however, draw attention to the fact that many of the insurance policies were not simply concerned with the plant, equipment and materials used by the cloth industry but contain information on other activities as well. There are a number of references, for example, to grist mills, brewhouses and poundhouses. So, partial though the information is in this respect, these inventories can be explored for other aspects of the Devon economy in the eighteenth century. There were also links, as Dr. Chapman points out, between the cloth industry and retailing while about 30 per cent of the policies indicate that clothworkers also had farming interests. And as an article by Dr. Chapman in *Devon Historian* 16 pointed out the inventories can also be used to cast light on industrial housing.

As far as the valuations are concerned, Dr. Chapman argues that they are based not on historic cost or market value but on replacement value. The sums insured range from £100 to £6,500 — The latter was the property of Claudius Passavant, a Huguenot merchant, who had three other policies as well, two for £2,000 and one for £1,300. Tuckers Hall, Exeter, was insured for £1,000 and Cricklepit Mills for £400. Of the thousand or so inventories, more than half are concerned with sums of £100, £100 or £300 while there are less

than 60 over £1,000 and only 16 (of which nine were in Exeter) over £2,000. As an aid, Dr. Chapman has provided an index of persons insured and of other persons mentioned in the text but nothing in the way of biographical detail. In view of the considerable labour of transcription of the details of the inventories, it is perhaps churlish to ask for more; nevertheless, the usefulness of the volume would have been increased if an index of the occupation of the insurers — which could have been simply done — had been given and an index of the types of buildings — a somewhat more difficult task — had been provided. The transcription of the text itself seems to be remarkably free from error though the valuation of Aaron Tozer's inventory of 22nd October, 1742 (p. 102) appears to have been misplaced.

Dr. Chapman has used these inventories to revise the history of the Devon cloth industry in the eighteenth century. He challenges the view that the decline of the industry in Devon was due to entrepreneurial failure and argues that the policies provide general evidence of the dynamic response of sergemakers and that the enterprise of Devon textile entrepreneurs was apparent almost to the end of the eighteenth century, as evidenced by the construction of extensive mills at Exeter, Tiverton, Barnstaple and Ottery St. Mary, but that expertise was not easily transferable from the north to the south. It was technological lag rather than lack of investment which, though it was postponed until the early 1790s, brought about the decline of the Devon cloth industry. To this, the narrowing differential between the price of wool and that of cotton also contributed, though the figures Dr. Chapman provide cover the years 1780-1820 whereas the policies he has transcribed are concerned with the years 1726-1770.

As will have become clear from the foregoing account, this is a very meaty volume, whose finance has been made possibly by a joint endeavour of the Pasold Research Fund, the Sun Alliance and London Insurance Group and the Devon and Cornwall Record Society. Further analysis of the information provided should lead to a better understanding of the Devon cloth industry in the eighteenth century.

Walter Minchinton



**CLOCKS AND CLOCKMAKERS OF TIVERTON.** By C.N. Ponsford, J.G.M. Scott and W.P. Authors. 1977. 64 pp. £1.80.

That invaluable source of information, the Devon Union List, notes six references under the heading 'Clocks'. One of these is J.K. Bellchambers 'Devonshire Clockmakers' published in 1962 and another is Inkerman Rogers' 'Some ancient clocks in North Devon' published in 1923. Two others relate to the Exeter Cathedral clock and another to the collection of clocks and watches in the Exeter Museum. Clearly this is the first book on the clocks and clockmakers of any Devon town. It is a remarkable record. It seems unlikely that any comparable town can boast as many as the eleven public clocks that Tiverton has or had, or the sixty or so clock and watch makers that are identified as being of Tiverton at the end of the book. But it would not do to speculate about the preeminence of Tiverton in this respect without knowing much more about other towns' clockmaking history. Doubtless most Devon towns of some prosperity had their clockmakers, Totnes, South Molton, Barnstaple, Crediton, Newton Abbot, Honiton, certainly did, and many fine long and bracket case clocks were produced in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in this and most other counties. The catchment area of Devon towns was small and each town had its clockmaker as it had its harness maker, or apothecary or stone cutter or other skilled tradesmen.

The book raises all sorts of speculations. Church clocks have been known since the Middle Ages but they seem to date from the seventeenth century in Tiverton's case. Was this the case everywhere and why particularly at that date? Private clocks in houses are thought to have become a fairly normal piece of furniture in the late seventeenth century. Tiverton's first clockmakers date from the early eighteenth century, about what might be expected. Again was it just a matter of wealth or fashion or technology or was it more necessary to be punctual about then? was the pace of life changing? Just when did the conventional time seeking gesture change from a glance up at the sun to a look at the public clock or at the pocket watch produced from the waistcoat pocket? And when did **that** change to a look at the wrist? Again it is interesting to note that fine long case clocks were still being made in Tiverton when they had been out of fashion for two generations or so in London. Does this time lag in fashion apply to other crafts and trades? House building for instance?

As well as telling us all there is to know about clocks and clockmakers in Tiverton this book has other interesting references to, for instance, the food riots in Tiverton in 1847, the famous Tiverton jewel robbery of 1827 with the subsequent public execution of the thieves outside Exeter prison, and to that too little remembered heroic Devonshire Radical Editor Thomas Latimer, The 'Cobbett of the West' and his great battles with the notorious Bishop Philpotts.

This is a very nicely produced book with 20 pages of illustrations and a useful and necessary glossary of technical terms at the back. It is the result of a happy cooperation between Rev. John Scott, who is Diocesan advisor on

church bells and clocks and Mr. Ponsford who is a journalist with a life-long interest in clocks and Mr. Authers, the well known authority on Tiverton history. It should pave the way for similar studies of other town's clocks and clockmakers.

R.G.F.S.

**ILFRACOMBE LOCAL HISTORY GROUP**  
**ILFRACOMBE AND LEE: SOME ASPECTS OF THEIR HISTORY,**  
University of Exeter, Extra Mural Department. 1977, 64 pp. 90p.

This quite substantial booklet of 64 pages represents some of the work of the Ilfracombe Local History Group. It is properly sub-titled "Some aspects of their history" a necessary qualification for a compilation of this nature, which embraces articles on Ilfracombe harbour and shipping, its listed buildings, the great fire of 1896 and a longer piece on the village of Lee. The researchers are keen amateurs, albeit under the expert guidance of John Longhurst, and the book must be judged in this context.

For me, a publication such as this exemplifies the fascination of local studies (a better word I think than "history"), which is the legitimate province of anyone from six to ninety - and beyond. The foreword states that the sources used included primary and secondary material and the personal reminiscences of older inhabitants.

It is impossible to get away from Ilfracombe's seafaring past, and the first twenty pages of the book tell us something of the harbour community and the ships which plied their trade between South Wales and North Devon - names with a ring to them like **Reformacon**, Jon Zachary, master, **The Five Sisters (of Coomertin)**, William Sealick, master and **The Providence (of Tenby)** Morgan Jenkins, master, this latter with fascinating mixed cargoes of barley and pigs). There are details of the hundred or so ships built in 'Combe between 1735 and 1838. "Ilfracombe" write the 18th century scribes "is a thriving and prosperous seaport at which Barnstaple merchants do much business because of the dangerous navigation of Barnstaple Bar and the silting up of the River Taw". In the 1780's one Richard Eames is listed as an anchor - smith, a trade not much met with even in seafaring Devon.

Often the more recent past evokes more interest than the distant, and many readers will rate the description of the great fire of 1896 the most interesting piece in the book, not least for the prose picture of Harry Hunter, member of the summer season Pierrot Troup, who discovered the fire, hammering away in vain at the glass of the fire alarm with his banjo.

John Hewitt's account of some of Ilfracombe's listed buildings is sensibly prefaced by an explanation of the styles of architecture involved. It is a pity that costly reproduction considerations would not allow him to draw on some of the abundant 19th century prints of the town.

The article on Lee is an individual tour de force. Hardly a stick or stone escapes the recording pen of Richard Howard and it is likely to be a useful source of reference for librarian and curator alike. One is almost tempted to enquire if there are any questions left to answer about the village. To be fair, all the contributors have left plenty of leads to follow - e.g. The British Universal Directory of 1791 will immediately add three names to Mr. Longhurst's shipbuilders.

A publication of this nature is probably the best vehicle to enable the work of this type of group to reach a wider readership. The University of Exeter's printing unit has done a tidy job on its production (just one or two transposed figures), and I heartily commend it at the modest price of 90p to the general reader and local studies enthusiast alike.

K.H.

## IN MEMORIAM

**SAINT LUKE'S COLLEGE 1839-1978.** The booklet is obtainable from Dept. 78, St. Luke's College, price £1.30 incl. postage.

The College is dead. Its death diminishes us all, for it was a place of great humanity.

A valedictory booklet has been produced by a group of Saint Luke's tutors. They explain, in an introduction which refers briefly and with studied moderation to the distressing circumstances of the death, that the booklet is not offered as history but as "a memento for those who have known and loved the College because its life has been part of their own." It is a commentary in pictures on the vigorous, colourful and changing life of Saint Luke's before it fell victim to the pill, the declining need for teachers, and administrative insensitivity. To those for whom it is specifically intended, it is a proud, sad, heart-warming recreation of happy, fruitful years. Even to those who have no connection with the College, it will prove an enthralling pictorial record of educational and social change. The booklet should have been a set book for all concerned with incorporating a remnant of a great College in the new University of Exeter School of Education.

We are told in the introduction that Daguerre and Fox-Talbot separately invented the techniques of photography the year the College was founded, so that the problem with illustrations was not to collect but to select. The selection is made with a generous and imaginative understanding of the astonishingly varied aspects of College life, from pontifical benediction to pig-breeding. The central double-page photograph dated 1947 shows a cricket match in progress against a backcloth of the North Cloister building, blitzed in 1942. In the mind's eye of those who have lived with the College through ruin, revival, reconstruction and expansion, the modern South Cloister building is super-imposed on the foreground to perform a dream like experiment with time, which brings reminders of Proust. An equivalent of Proust's madeleine would have been a 1946 photograph of students coming from morning chapel, each carrying a stone from a pile of ruins to its place in the buildings being restored. It is a pity this photograph was not included. Here, if ever, is a sermon in stone, a silently eloquent reproof to those who have emulated the luftwaffe and are now turning the interior of those buildings into a catafalque with standard fittings.

No wonder that the mood of the booklet is elegiac. There is a sense of autumn leaves, a touch of Ecclesiastes: "One generation goeth, and another generation cometh", but not, alas, to the same heritage. Students seem to be more sensitive to human values than many of their seniors; the University Boat Club has recently christened the latest addition to its fleet "Spirit of Saint Luke's"; there may after all be an optimistic answer to the caption under the last photograph in the booklet "The Gateway to the past - or the future?" The silver cord is loosed, — need the golden bowl be broken?

James Smeall

(Principal St. Luke's College, 1945-1972)

**WINDMILLS OF DEVON** by Walter Minchinton, Department of Economic History, University of Exeter and Exeter Industrial Archaeology Group, 1977, pp. 56. 60p. ISBN 0 9501778 6 5.

A first reaction is one of incredulous surprise at the mention of windmills in Devon. Yet the county is certainly windy enough - quite as much, one would have thought, as East Anglia, where they abound. It was Celia Fiennes' opinion that Devon was too bleak for them, a curious conclusion for the climate can hardly have changed that much since her celebrated tour in these parts. The more probable fact is that Devon's tumbled terrain and high rainfall offered better opportunities for using water power which was probably cheaper to organise and, despite drought, more certain in use than the wind. One can store water but not the wind, which may explain why there are certain records of some 600 water mills in the county and only 56 possible windmills.

The qualifying adjective is necessary for windmills so prominent when in situ their sites leave little evidence of their existence once they have gone. What this book does very usefully and succinctly is to bring together what information is known and conjectured. It also suggests that through its publication information about others may come to light which, indeed, is what the author is hoping for.

Physical evidence for the certain existence of nine windmills in Devon exists and the ruins of one of them, Furzecombe Mill, Paignton were updated in the last war to serve as an observation post. The existence of nearly 30 others is pretty certain and the possibility of at least 19 others may be hesitatingly entertained from, among other things, clues like "windmill corner" or "windmill hill" on ordnance survey maps. The earliest reference to a windmill in Devon seems to be in 1289. How late they operated in the county appears to be unknown; they appear to have fallen into disuse after the Napoleonic wars following a spate of building towards the end of the 18th and the beginning of the 19th centuries.

The siting of many of the known and conjectured mills is intriguing. From the plots on the book's sketch map the greater number appear to have been clustered around the Dart and Exe valleys, with, curiously, a much smaller huddle between Okehampton and Bideford an area one would have thought would have been ideal windmill country. East Devon, on present evidence, appears to be remarkably bare of them and only three appear in the neighbourhood of Plymouth, a place which is hardly a stranger to windy spells. What dictated this distribution and why do so many windmills appear to have been sited relatively remote from settlements, whereas water mills were generally much closer to the heart of the communities they served.

Nevertheless this is an enterprising and most valuable preliminary study, clearly arranged and usefully illustrated with drawings and elevation often adding to the value of the latter.

F.B.

**TORRE ABBEY.** By Deryck Seymour. An Account of its History. Buildings, Cartularies and Lands. 23.5 x 17.5 cm. pp. xvi + 306, with numerous plates, drawings maps and plans. Exeter: James Townsend and Sons. 1977. £10.

Torre Abbey was founded in 1196 by William Brewer, one of the most influential men in the kingdom. On the eve of the Dissolution, in 1535, its income - £396 11s. - made Torre the richest English house of the Praemonstratensian Order. Much of its wealth, in the form of estates, was acquired in the early days and most of this property lay within the county of Devon; there was one holding in West Somerset and another isolated on the Lincolnshire coast. The greater part of this book is devoted to a 'sentimental' pilgrimage to the lands and buildings held by Torre and a description of the surviving remains. While it is primarily of interest to local historians, the picture that emerges from this detailed survey has a wider interest.

The opening chapters, devoted to a brief history of the Abbey and an account of the monastic buildings, have little new to offer, though a number of photographs of the remains incorporated in the great house are welcome. The plan, based on that prepared by Hope (*Archaeological Journal*, lxx (1913), 546) adds a number of conjectural indications, some of which (e.g. 'AA - probable site of guests lodging') should be rejected. The grave identified as that of William Brewer, the younger, occupies the position in front of the High Altar, normally reserved for the 'founder's tomb'. As his father, the actual founder, was buried at Dunkeswell, there need be no doubt about this identification. The 'unknown benefactor' in the transept (EE on plan) may perhaps be identified as Peter Fitz Matthew, the donor of the valuable manor of Blackawton; he left his body to Torre and Leland mentions his burial there suggesting that he had a prominent tomb. One chapter records, with the Latin texts, the three little known tombstones of Abbots of Torre, now in East Oggwell Church; regrettably they are not illustrated.

The account of each property follows a set pattern, with a calendar of the relevant charters, an identification, where possible of the holdings and a description of the remaining buildings. The whole is lavishly illustrated with maps, plans, sketches and photographs. To many the main interest will centre in the houses. In spite of modernization many survive with substantial late medieval features and in recognizable form. They include good examples of the vernacular architecture of Devon. Of wider importance is the evidence for a standard type of courthouse, to which Mr. Seymour draws attention. This was in the form of a small hall, open to the roof and completely separated from the normal farmhouse, to which it was attached. He lists six examples, of which Oldstone, Blackawton, best illustrated the argument. An unusual holding was Ashclyst, which formed a prebend of the Castle Chapel of Exeter, to which the Abbot acquired the right of presentation.

The author is to be congratulated on the completion and publication of a fascinating record, presented in a attractive, if perhaps unorthodox, manner. Much of the evidence he has assembled will inevitably disappear as farmhouses are modernized.

C.A. Raleigh Radford.

**THE ASHBURTON BRANCH (AND THE TOTNES QUAY LINE)** by Anthony R. Kingdom. Oxford Publishing Company, 1977, 152 pp. £2.40. ISBN 0 902888 84 6.

**THE KINGSBRIDGE BRANCH (THE PRIMROSE LINE)** by Ken Williams and Dermot Reynolds. Oxford Publishing Company, 1977, vi + 248 pp. £3.60. ISBN 0 86093 001 7.

**THE GREAT WESTERN RAILWAY: A NEW HISTORY** by Frank Booker. Newton Abbot: David & Charles, 1977, 206 pp. £4.95. ISBN 0 7153 7455 9.

There is both a specialist and a general readership for railway history. The first two volumes under review tell in great detail the history of their particular branches of the Great Western network in Devon; the third provides an overall survey of one of Britain's major railway companies. The first volume tells the story of the Ashburton branch, begun in 1872 as a broad gauge spur of the South Devon Railway under the name of Buckfastleigh, Totnes and South Devon Railway and converted to standard gauge in 1897. It carried both passengers and a variety of goods traffic — incoming coal and timber bulked large while of the outgoing freight, cattle and farm produce predominated. It was closed to traffic in 1962. The new dual-carriageway from Exeter to Plymouth runs over much of the trackbed of the section of Buckfastleigh. Converted to a garage, the all-over shed of Ashburton station can still be seen. The truncated remainder of the line from Buckfastleigh almost to Totnes is now operated by the Dart Valley Railway. The other small stretch of line discussed in this book — the Totnes Quay line — was operated as a horse-drawn goods line until 1874 while the section past the level crossing on the Plains at Totnes continued to be horsedrawn until 1948 from which date until its closure in 1969 it was operated with a tractor. It carried timber to Reeves timber yard, apples to Symmonds cider works and pigs to the Harris factory and took away the products, timber, cider and bacon.

For the Kingsbridge line, the subject of the second volume, a number of proposals were made from 1854 onwards but construction did not begin until 1891 and the official opening did not take place until 19th December 1893. The line, which was single track with a passing place at Gara bridge, carried passengers and freight — chiefly grain, livestock and other farm products, stone, timber and machinery — to meet local needs. The last train ran almost 70 years after its completion on 13th September 1963 and the lifting of the track for scrap was completed by May 1964.

Both these volumes, which are written by enthusiasts and copiously illustrated with photographs, maps, graphs and diagrams, provide a great deal of information about these branch lines: a description of the track itself, timetables of the services provided, details of the locomotives employed and so on together with reminiscences of passengers and operating staff and an account of what now remains. These are very attractive volumes full of local detail and extremely good value.

To put such branch lines in perspective one can turn to the brightly written account by Frank Booker which apparently is the first one-volume history of the Great Western Railway from its beginnings until the last days of its independent existence. For the GWR I have a particular affection since at my first interview for a university job many years ago the inevitable layman on the appointing committee, not wishing to be left out of the act, asked me what was the coat-of-arms of the GWR. To the great good fortune that I knew the answer I attribute my successful application for the post. Typical of the journalistic approach — the odd misprint which even the heaviest of our newspaper can no longer escape; the occasional grammatical quirk, the result of rushing new copy to the press at the last moment; the vivid turn of phrase and the bold generalisation — the broad gauge in Devon and Cornwall, Mr. Booker writes, proved the most potent instrument of social change since the Norman Conquest — this book provides a manageable account of a major railway network. A summary of existing knowledge rather than a pioneering history, it should provide a starting point for further investigation. Now that the GWR is no longer rushing through her dining room, Mrs. Booker will be able to relax and restore it to its proper purpose.

Walter E. Minchinton

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#### DIRECTORY OF RARE BOOK COLLECTIONS

The Rare Books Group of the Library Association is in process of producing a Directory of Rare Book Collections. This will cover the whole country and will be much more extensive than anything hitherto published. It should prove extremely useful to scholars. Most of the Directory will be devoted to major collections in National, Public, University and similar libraries, but it also envisaged that many other smaller collections (such as those in small institutions, country houses, and personal libraries) will be included, if they are of sufficient interest. Information on these smaller collections is often difficult to obtain but if any of the readers of the **Devon Historian** know of libraries that might fall within the scope of the Directory could they please write to the organiser for Devon, Mr. D.W. Evans, University Library, University of Exeter, Exeter, EX4 4PT, who will be most grateful for their assistance.



## RECORDING LOCAL HISTORY IN MALBOROUGH

Alan Boyce

Headmaster, Marlborough Voluntary Primary School

As part of Marlborough's celebrations of the Queen's Silver Jubilee in 1977 an exhibition was mounted in the school. This consisted of exhibits of historical relics, photographs and childrens' work connected with Marlborough and its surrounding district's past.

One particular collection of copies in slide form of old photographs of events and personalities was lent by Mr. Stan Parr. With the assistance of Mr. Jack Yeoman, this collection of about thirty slides was arranged in an imaginative sequence, and a spoken commentary was prepared on cassette tape, which could be then played back in synchronisation with an automatic gadget, the tape player controlled the action of the slide projector.

The most attractive features of this display were not only the excellent quality of the enlarged and projected colour photographs but also the fascinating and informal commentary by Mr. Yeoman, prompted occasionally by Mr. Parr.

The resulting display demonstrated that this is an excellent way of presenting and preserving old photographic material. At the same time it prompts and records the memories of those in the community best able to talk about past times and experiences.

## LOCAL CRAFTS IN THE SOUTH HAMS

During the winter 1977 --- '78, the Marlborough and Salcombe History Group organised a series of discussions on local crafts and skills, and some recent research, under the auspices of the Exeter Extra-Mural Department.

These meetings proved most interesting, producing facts which might not otherwise have been discovered. Some of the local experts invited to join the discussions were, not surprisingly, unwilling to give a talk as such, but once embarked on a demonstration of the tools and skills required, prompted by questions from the members, the information fairly flowed. In fact there was more material for each topic than time allowed.

The evening began with an introduction by the class tutor to explain the historical aspects, and to give some continuity to the course. The subjects have included: Thatching, particularly of ricks; Machinery on the Farm, with films of Vintage Farm Machinery provided by the South Hams enthusiasts; Hand Tools and Wheelwrighting; Dairying, with a demonstration of the almost forgotten art of making flowers from butter for display; Hedge Banks and timber on the farm; Water Mills and Windmills; Shipwrighting; Health, Sickness and the Poor; Dialect and local colloquialisms; and finally a round up of information on the deserted village sites in this area.

To give just two examples of facts brought to light: when hedge bank

timber was discussed, one member said his family had always kept the stem of the Christmas tree to make a carter's whip; the tree was thus the traditional holly, not the now familiar spruce made fashionable by Prince Albert. Some Devon families maintain the older custom to-day. Information about the mills has shown a surprisingly large number still in use in the thirties. The last Kingsbridge firm to undertake milling for private individuals gave it up only in 1977.

These evenings have added greatly to our knowledge, not least in understanding the meaning of "Now I be goin up Morbro do me arrants, but that thar cold wind, thet'll blow the cobwebs off me natlins," and other essential idioms.

K.S.C. 1978

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## NOTES ON NEW CONTRIBUTORS

Robert Newton, CMG settled in Devon after a distinguished career in the Colonial Civil Service. His doctoral thesis *Victorian Exeter, 1837-1914*, was published by Leicester University Press in 1968. He is now writing a history of Exeter from 1688 to 1835.

Harold Trump was before retirement Director of Extra Mural Studies at Southampton University. He has recently published *Westcountry Harbour: the Port of Teignmouth 1690-1975* (Brunswick Press, 1976).

Peter Hunt is Assistant County Planning Officer (Rural and Conservation) for Devon. He compiled (and contributed to) the Devon County Planning Department's series: *Doorway to Devon*, *Devon Wetlands* and *Devon's Traditional Buildings*.

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Long Whitstone,  
Bovey Tracey,  
S. Devon.  
Tel. Bovey Tracey (0626) 833389

Dear Mrs. Stirling,

Could some trained person write a short clear and simple article for the Devon Historian on how to assemble material, suggesting schemes and headings, perhaps a card index, stressing the importance of dates (so often not appended to old newspaper cuttings) and sources of information. I cannot suggest doing it myself because my knowledge is limited, though my own method and card indexes are invaluable to me and I devoutly hope may ultimately be intelligible to those at the museum for which I have been working. The most useful tip came from a layman: to keep handwritten notebooks to report in my case, visits to craftsmen and extracts from books and roughly listing their contents at the beginning. The page numbers go on the relevant cards in my indexes. Even the making of such a note or scrap book, using it also for sticking in cuttings, could produce some order. Loose leaves and one side of the leaf only might increase its usefulness. Larger printed things can be kept in folders and numbered for the index.

A few years ago I was left a boxful of partly undated material and photographs by a dear and knowledgeable friend. It is not fully sorted yet and is handed in, in small slices to the Devon Record Office.

Yours sincerely,  
Dorothy M. Dix (Mrs.)

96 Beaumont Street,  
Milehouse,  
Plymouth. PL2 3AQ.

Dear Madam,

I am researching immigration to Plymouth and its immediate neighbourhood from other parts of Devon and Cornwall in the Napoleonic period.

If any of your readers has details of families moving here during this time (wherever they went afterwards) I would be grateful to hear from them.

Yours faithfully,  
Ann V. Chiswell (Mrs.)

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