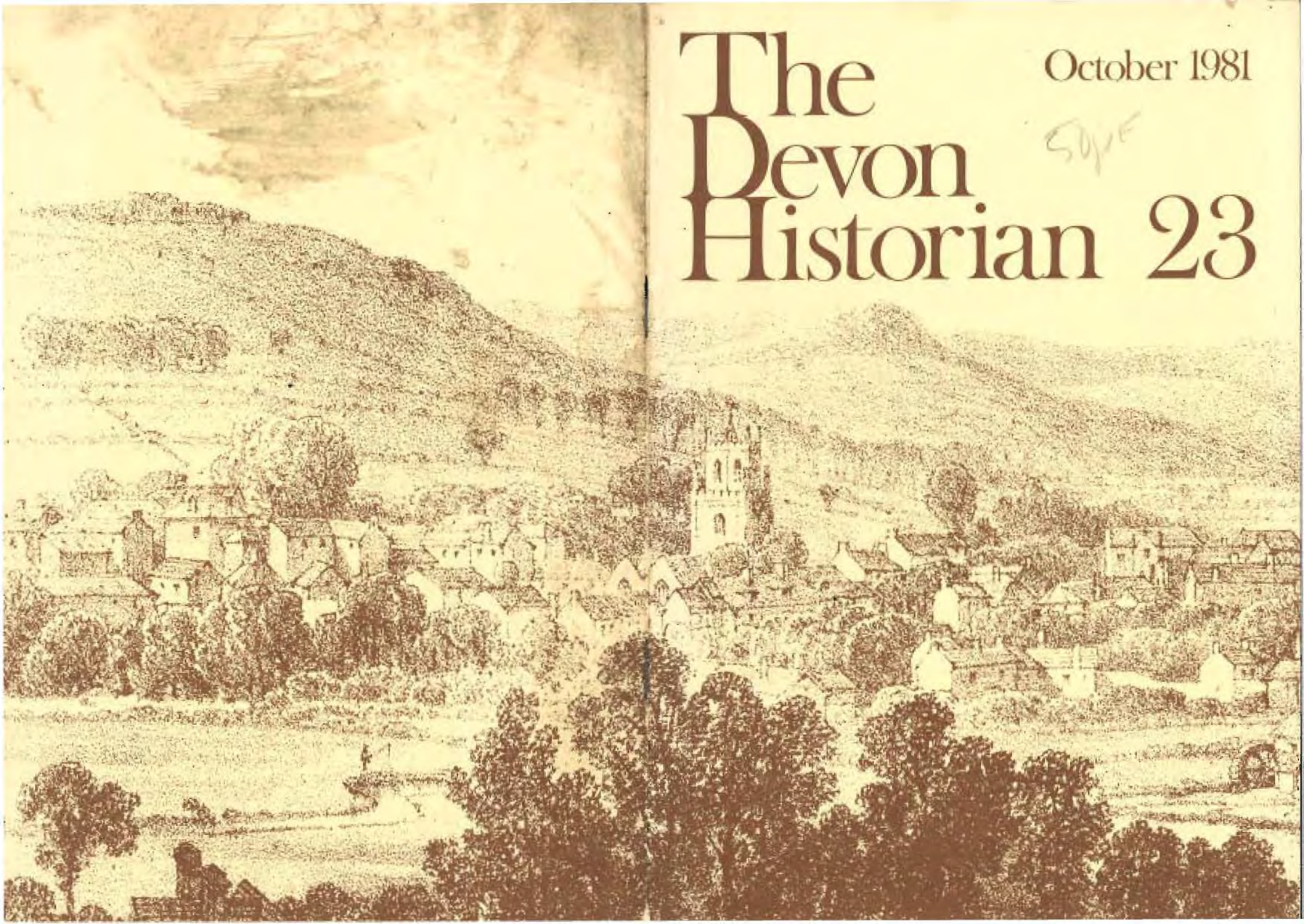


October 1981

50p

The Devon Historian 23



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Correspondence relating to the *Devon Historian* and contributions for publication should be sent to the Editor, The Devon Historian, c/o Devon and Exeter Institution, 7 The Close, Exeter. The deadline for the next issue is 31 January 1982.

DEVON HISTORY SOCIETY: CONFERENCES

One-day conferences will be held as follows:— Colyton, 7 November 1981; Hatherleigh, 27 February 1982.

The print on the cover is a detail from Colyton from Kingsdown, lith. by and after William Spreat in *The book of the Axe*, by George P. R. Pulman, 4th ed., 1875. (Somers-Cocks, No. 406).

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EXETER IN THE CENSUS OF RELIGIOUS WORSHIP, 1851

Bruce Coleman

In an earlier article (*Devon Historian*, 18, April 1979) the present author gave a preliminary analysis of the patterns of worship in Devon revealed by the unique official Census of Religious Worship in 1851. Here some of the same approaches are applied to the printed figures provided for Exeter in the Census Report. These figures have already been used by Alan Brockett¹ and by Robert Newton², and the present article is intended to extend their discussion (as well as to query a few points of detail and emphasis), to put Exeter into a comparative perspective and to explore some of the problems involved in using the printed summary figures.

Exeter appears in two places in the Religious Census volume: as one of the twenty registration districts in the registration county of Devon and as one of 65 'large towns' outside London given special statistical treatment, Devonport and Plymouth being the other 'large towns' in Devon.³ The Exeter registration district and the municipal borough (the 'large town') were virtually identical in area and population but there were certain discrepancies between the two summary tables for Exeter. The most important was the addition in the registration district table of a second 'undefined' congregation, so making the total number of places of worship 41 instead of 40 as in the municipal borough table. Brockett has identified the extra place of worship as a Calvinist Tabernacle in Coombe Street, but no congregation seems to have survived there after 1847 and there is no return for the Tabernacle extant in the Public Record Office, so the figure of 40 is perhaps the more realistic one. Table A below gives a modified and corrected version of what appeared in the 'large towns' listing for Exeter, and it also differs in a few particulars from that provided by Brockett.

Table B gives the attendance totals for Exeter (and for various other areas) in the form of percentages. The mode of calculation, as used in my earlier article, provides what is called an 'index of attendance' (IA) — that is, the sum total of attendances (morning, afternoon and evening) as a percentage of population. The figures given in the printed summary tables of the Census Report are easily converted to provide the IA for the sum total of denominations, for individual denominations or for various denominational groupings (e.g. all types of Methodists or all types of Baptists). Beyond that, one can calculate the percentage share (PS) of total attendances enjoyed by a particular denomination or denominational grouping. Table B, however, simply shows the total IA, the IA and PS for the Church of England, and the IA and PS for the total of non-Anglican denominations. To put Exeter into some perspective, the table also shows the figures for England & Wales, for Devon, for Devonport and Plymouth, for the total of the 65 large towns identified in the Census Report, for the total of the large towns of 25-50,000 inhabitants (a category into which Exeter itself fell) and for the registration district of St. Thomas's which lay around Exeter.

A preliminary caution may be necessary. The index of attendance method has many advantages, notably simplicity, but it also has conspicuous limitations. The Census figures, however they are processed, do not give us the numbers of *people* who attended worship on 30th March 1851. They represent attendances, with no allowances for people who attended more than once during the day. Obviously the number of people attending in any given area was somewhere between the

attendances for the best-attended session and the sum total of all attendances — in the case of Exeter between the 12,285 of the morning session and the 27,725 for the whole day. Where the true figure lay between these limits is impossible to say, though it was almost certainly some way from either. There is no conversion factor to provide the answer, though the author of the Census Report did speculate with one and certain recent historians (Newton among them) have followed suit. What the attendance totals represented by the IA do allow, however, is some comparison between one denomination and another and between one locality and another. In other words, its main value is for comparative purposes. Another point to be noted is that attendances (or even attenders) were not the same thing as 'members', a term (used by Newton) which implies fuller denominational involvement than mere attendance. Other kinds of evidence, like chapel records, can tell us something about congregational membership, but the Census figures themselves makes no contribution to that problem.

As one can see from Table B, Exeter's total of religious practice was considerably above the national average, higher even than the figure for Devon and around half as high again as attendances in Devonport and Plymouth. It is worth noting that the city also maintained a higher level of practice than the surrounding and largely rural registration district of St. Thomas's. Indeed only two of Devon's registration districts (Kingsbridge and South Molton) bettered Exeter's figures. Among the large towns of the Census Report Exeter stands out equally clearly. Its total IA of 84.5 was the third highest, behind Colchester and Merthyr Tydfil, and it was far above the average for the Census towns as a whole and for Exeter's own size-category.

The reasons for Exeter's notably high level of religious observance are not hard to see. It was a cathedral city well-provided with churches in its central and most densely populated areas; its industrial and commercial history had entrenched Protestant Dissent in a variety of forms; it had experienced relatively gentle growth in the early nineteenth century, so that numbers of immigrants were fairly small by the standards of most contemporary cities and its spatial growth limited; most of its immigrants were from adjacent parts of Devon where religious practice was also fairly strong, as a county and retirement town it had attracted large numbers of the prosperous and the genteel; and it was little touched by large-scale industrialization and retained a high proportion of its population in the professional, trading, shop-keeper and artisan classes where religious practice was well established. Most of the factors, therefore, that made for high levels of religious observance in nineteenth-century towns and cities were present in Exeter.⁴

Nearly two-thirds of the city's attendances on Census Sunday were in the Church of England. In absolute terms too Exeter was a strongly Anglican city. Its Anglican IA of 54.7 was well above the corresponding figures for England & Wales, for Devon, and for Devonport and Plymouth, and it was bettered only by South Molton among the county's registration districts. Among the large towns of the Census Exeter returned the highest Anglican IA of all, two-and-a-half times the average, and so could lay claim to the strongest Churchmanship of any English city.

As for the Church's share of attendances, Exeter's Anglican PS put it fourth among the large towns — behind Worcester, Dover and Oxford. Within Devon itself Exeter, in this respect at least, was less remarkable, its Anglican PS being bettered

by five other registration districts, all in the eastern half of the county. It is worth noting that in the St. Thomas's district the Church attracted more than three-quarters of the attendances. In terms of Anglican dominance Exeter and its East Devon hinterland were of a piece. The reasons for Exeter's notably Anglican character can be found among those given above for the high level of religious practice in general. Little in the city's history - particularly in its early nineteenth-century history - had served to undermine the Anglican hegemony to be expected of a slow-growing cathedral city and county town in the southern half of England. Exeter was, after all, one of the declared models for the Barchester which Trollope was to introduce to the reading public within a few years of the Census.

Nonconformity inevitably presented a more complicated picture. Brockett puts some emphasis on the strength of Dissent in the city, but 'strength' is a relative term and it is clear that Exeter's Dissent was weak when compared with local Anglicanism and with the Nonconformist share of attendances in most large towns. As Table B shows, however, this was a relative weakness rather than an absolute one. The IA for the total of non-Anglican denominations was comparable to the figures for England & Wales, for Devon, for Devonport and Plymouth and for the average of the Census's 65 large towns. It was almost twice the figure for the St. Thomas's district, though lower than the figures for a number of registration districts in Devon. It was the non-Anglican PS, not the IA, that was strikingly low, and this of course reflected the unusual strength of the Church of England in Exeter.

What distinguished Exeter's Nonconformity from that in most other parts of Devon was less its weakness than its diversity and the lack of any dominant denomination. Large towns usually sustained many more denominations than the rural registration districts, and Exeter's history had been of the kind to provide a wide range of religious choice to those who looked beyond the established Church. With twelve non-Anglican denominations, Exeter could boast the largest number of all the Devon registration districts. But the largest total of attendances that any single denomination could set against the nearly 18,000 of the establishment was the 2120 of the Baptists, with the Wesleyan Methodist attendances numbering 2050. The sects spawned by the Evangelical revival were certainly, in toto, the largest Nonconformist element but they were divided into the Wesleyan Methodists, the Wesleyan Reformers and the Bible Christians. (There was no Primitive Methodist congregation recorded in Exeter - or indeed in Devon - in 1851, though the denomination was to become active in the city a few years later.) All this meant that Nonconformity was badly fragmented in Exeter, with no denomination in the position of strength occupied in some parts of the county by the Wesleyans, the Bible Christians and even, in Plymouth, the Brethren. It was perhaps significant of Exeter's religious culture that the third largest (technically) Nonconformist denomination, accounting for 1700 attendances on Census Sunday, should be an ambiguously labelled 'Free Church of England' congregation which had originated a few years earlier in the distaste of a number of Anglican Evangelicals for ritualistic tendencies and for the authority of Bishop Phillpotts. There were also, among the total of non-Anglican attendances, small numbers of Jews and Roman Catholics which could hardly be counted as Nonconformist in anything but the technical sense.

Far from monolithic, Exeter Nonconformity also possessed a distinctly kaleidoscopic side, as illustrated by the demise of the Coombe Street congregation,

the appearance of the 'Free Church of England' and the split of the Wesleyan Reformers from the main Connexion all in the few years prior to the Census. The last schism was national, not merely local, but there were also other indications of floating voters within the constituency of local Dissent. No doubt some of these developments indicated vitality, but they added an element of instability to the fragmentation of local Nonconformity which we have already noted. The foundation and success of the 'Free Church of England' suggests that that element was not altogether absent in local Anglicanism either.

Most of the above discussion is based on the printed summaries of the Census of Religious Worship. There also exist the MS returns in the Public Record Office at Kew which, though deficient and disappointing in certain respects, add considerably to what can be gleaned from the printed summaries.⁵ They give, for example, attendances for individual places of worship (not just whole denominations like the printed summaries) and they distinguish Sunday scholars from the general congregation at services. A full consideration of the MS returns has to be left to a longer article elsewhere, but there is one point worth mentioning here. It is the problem of boundaries. The registration district and the municipal borough, the areas used for Census purposes, were not the whole of Exeter. The parliamentary borough, for example, was considerably larger and its boundaries, containing a population of 40,688 (against the 32,823 of the registration district), recognized the integral relationship with the city of St. Thomas's parish across the river, of St. Leonard's parish and of parts of the parishes of Heavitree and Alphington. Though all these districts were outside Exeter as defined for Census purposes, the historian of religious practice in the city has to take some account of them. The MS returns of the Census permit this to be done to some extent, the printed summaries do not.

TABLE A

EXETER (Registration district: Population 32,823)

Denomination	Places of Worship	Sittings	Attendances			Total
			Morning	Afternoon	Evening	
Church of England	25	10,840	7,852	5,438	4,655	17,945
Independents	2	1,072	557	133	507	1,197
Baptists and Particular Baptists	3	1,030	960	290	1,050	2,300
Society of Friends	1	700	54		37	91
Unitarians	1	800	364		250	614
Wesleyan Methodists	2	1,380	920	150	980	2,050
Bible Christians	1	800	130	165	220	515
Wesleyan Reformers	1	345	300	60	345	705
Brethren	1	200	150		120	270
Isolated Congregation (Free Church of England)	1	1,000	700	200	800	1,700
Roman Catholics	1	200	250			250
Jews	1	90	48	12	28	88
Total	40	18,457	12,285	6,448	8,992	27,725

TABLE B

Area	Total IA	Church of England		Non-Anglican	
		IA	PS	IA	PS
England & Wales (corrected)	60.8	29.5	48.6	31.3	51.4
Devon	70.5	40.1	56.9	30.4	43.1
EXETER (municipal borough)	84.5	54.7	64.7	29.8	35.3
Devonport	56.5	22.0	39.0	34.5	61.0
Plymouth	55.1	24.5	44.5	30.6	55.5
St. Thomas (registration district)	63.5	48.5	76.4	15.0	23.6
65 large towns	48.3	19.9	41.3	28.4	58.7
39 towns with 25-50,000 inhabitants	53.8	25.1	46.7	28.7	53.3

1. *Nonconformity in Exeter 1650-1875* (Manchester, 1962), pp. 230-34.
2. *Victorian Exeter* (Leicester, 1968), pp. 100-101.
3. Parliamentary Papers 1852-3, LXXXIX, Census, 1851: Religious Worship (England & Wales), pp. cclvii and 53.
4. The religious typology of nineteenth-century towns is discussed by B. I. Coleman, *The Church of England in the Mid-Nineteenth Century: A Social Geography* (Historical Association, 1980), especially pp. 26-37.
5. The P.R.O. number of the returns for Exeter is Home Office 129/282. The returns for the parts of 'Greater Exeter' listed in the final paragraph above can be found among those for the St. Thomas's registration district under H.O. 129/281.

HUGH SQUIER OF SOUTH MOLTON, 1625-1710

A note of his founding of the Free School in South Molton, his Will and his benefactions to the town;

compiled by Gertrude Morey of the South Molton Archive.

Hugh Squier was born at Townhouse in 1625. Townhouse is a mansion or large farmhouse, still in use, about four miles from South Molton on the B3227 road to Umberleigh. Hugh Squier's grandfather lived there, and his father, William Squier was born there in 1581. William Squier is described as a "yeoman". He was a prosperous farmer and landowner who married Jane (Roberts?) of Barnastaple. They had eight children, four boys and four girls. Hugh was the youngest of the family.

It is not known where Hugh Squier was educated, although he was, judging from his preserved letters and documents, a very literate man. His father, William Squier, had been admitted to Cambridge University at the age of nineteen. It is likely that Hugh was educated by the Revd John Coren who was a Minister at South Molton in 1629, and also a schoolmaster. Under the laws of inheritance, Townhouse and the land would become the property of the eldest son, Hugh's brother Christopher. Hugh's brother, Richard, became a soldier. Hugh himself was sent to London and placed in a merchant's office. He eventually became a prosperous merchant himself. He is known to have had dealings with the East India Company, which had been set up in 1600 under a charter from Queen Elizabeth. Hugh Squier's father died in 1653. There seems to have been little or nothing left to Hugh, but in 1654 his eldest brother, Christopher, granted a lease for 99 years to Hugh of the manorial rights of South Molton, at the yearly rent of "twenty pounds and seven shillings of lawful money". In 1648, Christopher Squier had purchased from Sir George Whitmore, for the consideration of £900, the fee simple of the Manor of South Molton with the "tolles, faires, markets and all other profits" thereto belonging. Hugh's mother, Jane, is mentioned in connection with this lease as though it was held jointly. There is also mentioned the name of "Thomas Dennys, son of Phillip Dennys of Ilfracombe" in connection with the granting of this lease. It is likely that Thomas Dennys was the son of one of Hugh's sisters.

Hugh married Catherine... and lived at Petty France in London (now York Street, St. James's). He eventually owned a considerable amount of property in London, including three houses in St. Martins-le-Grand, four houses in Golden Square, and a house in Park Street. One of his friends in London was Peter Rudge, a London tailor, who was also born in South Molton. Hugh had four children, all of whom died young, and were buried in the "New Chapel" or "Broadway Chapel" which had been built in the 1630s as a chapel-of-ease to St. Margaret's, Westminster. During his lifetime, and by his Will, Hugh Squier gave generously to the Church of Windsor and the Vestry of the Parish of St. Margaret's, Westminster, and to Westminster Charities. He was the first President of the Grey Coat Hospital in London and also had long connections with the School of the Blue Coat Boys. He left annuities to both schools in his Will.

Although Hugh Squier lived all his life in London, he was very much attached to South Molton and kept in touch with those of his family who still lived in Townhouse. At the beginning of 1682, Hugh Squier wrote of his intention to

build and endow a Charity School in South Molton. The document begins: "That there shall be a school house built in S. Molton Church Yard (if there be not found a more convenient Place for it in that towne) . . . to contain 50 boys, etc. . . ." (It is not clear to what the "etc." referred — certainly not girls, because in another document, referring to the number of free pupils, and containing the phrase "20 boyes and girls", the word "girls" had been crossed out, the words "young men" written above. The document sets out fully how Hugh Squier wanted the school built, even to the extent of stipulating that iron netting be provided outside the windows to prevent their being broken by stones!

The School was to be endowed with £32 per annum from the revenues of Upcott Farm, Chittlehampton and by other fee farm rents which were to be purchased for that purpose. In fact, this was increased to £40 per annum in his Will. The revenue from Upcott was increased by that from glebe and rectorial tithes at Northam which Hugh Squier later purchased. (There is still an Upcott Farm at Chittlehampton, in fact, there are now two — Higher Uppercot Farm and Lower Uppacott Farm, both in the Parish of Chittlehampton and not Swimbridge as mentioned in some of the documents.) Hugh Squier stipulated that not more than twenty boys at any one time were to be taught and the remainder to be fee-paying pupils. The number of free scholars was increased to thirty in his Will.

The first document setting out Hugh Squier's aims was rather remarkable for its insistence that the school was not to be a Latin or Grammar School. He did not think the teaching of Latin would be of much use to the majority of boys at the school for ". . . unless a man means to be a divine or a lawyer or an apothecary or a gentleman, he makes no use thereof but forgets againe all that he learnt . . . and is not much the wiser man if that he could remember it still". Hugh Squier was insistent that the School should be chiefly for the teaching of good writing and arithmetic, ". . . and this shall not be a home book school to teach little children to read, nor shall any one be admitted but such as can read in the psalter before they are admitted . . . but this school shall be chiefly to teach good writing and arithmetic . . . arithmetic, as necessary as our daily bread." He goes on, ". . . and therefore, whyles others build Almshouses to relieve the poor, I do desire to prevent them from ever being poor, and instead of living in other Almshouses, that some of these may in tyme build Almshouses for others to live in."

The building of the School was started in 1684, but not in the Churchyard. The site was that of the old "Hunt's Alms Houses". These by then derelict buildings were in East Street, on the north side, not far from the junction of Station Road and East Street. Hugh Squier purchased the site from his friend Peter Rudge. The Mayor and Corporation of South Molton were present at the laying of the foundation stone. The School was opened in 1686 and included a house for the Writing Master. Nicholas Mallaree was the first Writing Master and the Revd John Cruse, Vicar of the Parish, was appointed the first Latin Master. According to the "Rules for the Government of the School" the Writing Master was to receive Twenty pounds per annum and the Latin Master was to receive the same amount. The salary to the Writing Master was increased to Twenty-five pounds in Hugh Squier's Will, and there are records showing that this was paid to him. There is, however, no record of any payment to the Revd Cruse. Presumably he received his salary from the fee-paying pupils. In the Rule Book, dated 1686, there is the following, ". . . and to permit both schoolmasters to teach so many other scholars

as they can get and to receive what reward the said schoolmasters (and friends of the young people) can agree upon." The appointment of a Latin Master was rather surprising in view of Hugh Squier's aims, set out in his first document. It was probably a matter of expediency in order to attract the fee-paying pupils whose parents expected a grammar education. There is a clue to this in a sentence written by Hugh Squier in the Rules given in the Minute Book, ". . . until it should in process of time, so happen, that the said school should be sufficiently filled with writing scholars without the help of latin scholars."

On completion of the building, the property was conveyed to the Trustees. The first Trustees were, Hugh's eldest brother, Christopher, his nephew, Christopher's son, William; John Hacche of Aller; Anthony Pawle of Honiton (now known as Honiton Barton), and Humphrey Shobbrooke of South Molton. A set of Rules for the running of the School was written by Hugh Squier into the first Minute Book, and these have already been quoted above. It was stipulated that the Rules should be read out at the twice-yearly feasts, in April and October "and enquiry made whether they are kept and well observed." If the Rules ceased to be observed, the property of Upcott and the fee farm rents of Northam were to become the property of the King's Hospital of Green Coat Boys in Tuthill Fields in London. Hugh Squier also stated that so long as there remained any members of his family living in the town or parish of South Molton, one or more should always serve as Governors.

Christopher Squier died in April 1693 and his son, William, died in January 1699. William Squier had two children, John and Elizabeth. John was born in 1694. In 1710, at the age of sixteen years while he was at Eton College, and on the death of Hugh Squier, John was elected a Governor of the Charity School in South Molton. However, there is no record of his having attended any meetings. He died in 1725. He was the last of the Squier family to be Governor. John and Elizabeth Squier were Hugh Squier's main beneficiaries in his Will. Elizabeth lived on at Town House until her death in 1734. Hugh Squier's other two brothers were Richard, a soldier who died in 1669, and William, the third brother who married and had two daughters. William died in 1681 and probably his widow was Priscilla Squier mentioned in Hugh's Will.

The first Latin Master of the School, the Revd Cruse, died in 1691 and the Latin School seems to have been discontinued until the appointment of the Revd Musgrave Hele in 1719. However, two years after the death of the Revd Cruse, Hugh Squier received in London a letter from Mr Hele (who was apparently his correspondent in South Molton). This contained a request from the Governors to allow Mr Mallaree to teach Latin. Hugh Squier sent a reply to the Governors through Mr Mallaree, saying, ". . . Mr Hele importuned me to turne my schole into a Grammar schole, that so his children and other Gentry might be taught at home. I answered, let his (and any body's children with all my heart) learn there to write, etc. Nor would I hinder young Mallaree (for the tyme present) from teaching such ye beginning of ye Grammar too. But tis in hopes that he will never let it grow to be a comon latin schole, for then my charity would be abused, my designs defeated and all my cost and labour lost. . . ." (It is interesting to mention here that for many years before the amalgamation of Hugh Squier's School with the other local schools in 1877, it was known as "the Latin School".) In this letter written by Hugh Squier, he mentions that Mr Mallaree, Senior, offered to provide, among other things, paper, pens and ink for the poorer children. There seems to have been an

attempt on Mr Mallaree's part to ingratiate himself into Hugh Squier's good books by making this and other generous offers, probably because of disagreements with the Governors. In Hugh Squier's Will, the Corporation of South Molton was asked to pay for the children's pens, paper and ink. In the Receivers' Accounts for the Borough of South Molton commencing in November 1805 (there seem to be no earlier records) there are half-yearly or yearly items showing payments to suppliers for paper, pens and ink and quills for Mr Squier's Free School. The first item mentioned for November 1805, was for eight shillings.

Hugh Squier's Will makes interesting reading, with some probably unintentionally humorous passages. He asked that a few of the Grey Coat boys should go before the corpse but only those who could sing as he hated discord even in the voices of children. He left money to be distributed by his Executors to 100/200 poor people of Westminster with children. He stipulated that they were to be paid as they entered his house at the front, and kept behind the house until all were paid, and then let out altogether, so that no one of them could walk round into the front door and be paid twice. After such arduous work, the Executors were to stay to dine and treat themselves to two or three gins, as they saw fit.

Hugh Squier was generous in his Will to the Corporation of South Molton and his Free School. He confirmed the payment of Forty pounds per annum to the School, to be allocated as follows:—

For the 5 School Trustees	£ 5. 0. 0
For the Schoolmaster of the Free School	25. 0. 0
For two annual feasts	3. 0. 0
For repair of the school and school house and the land before it	7. 0. 0
	<hr/>
	£40. 0. 0

A balance of £64. 7. 9½d. left from income from Upcott Farm, estates in Northam and rent from St. Margaret's, Westminster, was left to the Corporation of South Molton with instructions that half was to be paid to the Mayor and half towards mending the highways in or near South Molton, especially between Mole Bridge and the school house. It was from this income that the Corporation was asked to pay for the children's pens, ink and paper. A further payment of Twenty pounds per annum from the rents of his three houses in St. Martins-le-Grand was to be made to the five Trustees of the Free School to be added to the revenue already given to the school for maintenance.

Hugh Squier also left Five pounds to the poor of the Town of South Molton and Five pounds to the poor of the Parish of South Molton. (For some years there had not in fact been a separate Town and Parish). He also left Five pounds each for the poor of Barnstaple and Great Torrington. Fifty-four rings were distributed under the terms of the Will, but it is not known if any have survived. Hugh Squier's Will is dated 1709. He died in 1710 and was buried with his wife and children at Westminster. There were monuments erected to their memory in the Broadway Chapel at Westminster, but these were destroyed when the Chapel was found to be dangerous and rebuilt in the 1840s.

How has Hugh Squier been remembered by South Molton? In 1799 a portrait of him was painted by a Mr Whitby, probably taken from an existing miniature and

this portrait was hung in the school. The miniature of Hugh Squier, which was owned by a Mrs May, was sold to the Town Council in 1796. Mounted on a pendant, it forms part of the chain of office worn by the Mayor of South Molton. In the hall of the Primary School is a bust of Hugh Squier. Public recognition of Hugh Squier's generosity to the town (which had enabled the town to be free from levying rates during the 18th and part of the 19th centuries) took rather longer. In 1910, exactly two hundred years after his death, a relief bust was erected outside the Guildhall, and in 1946, the new council estate built off Station Road was named "Hugh Squier Avenue" in his honour.

Publications consulted:

Records of Ye Antient Borough of South Molton, John Cock, 1893.

Concise History of South Molton, John Mills, 1892.

Hugh Squier's School: Free School Rules, Governors' Minutes, Accounts, 1868-1755, Vol. I.

Additional information supplied by Mr S. Warren, former Town Clerk of South Molton, and Mrs Margaret Baugh, of South Molton.

SHIPPING REGISTERS

Margery Rowe, Devon Record Office

As part of a national scheme to transfer shipping registers to local record offices, the older shipping registers in Devon Customs and Excise offices are being transferred to the Devon Record Office. These volumes are *not* a record of the movement of ships, arriving at and departing from the ports, but constitute documents of title to property, providing full details of the dimensions, ownership, history and ultimate fate of each ship registered, in each port, in chronological order of registration. None in Devon is earlier in date than the general statutory registry of British ships in the outports introduced by the Shipping Act of 1786 but all the series pre-date the Merchant Shipping Act of 1894, under which the present registers of ships are made.

The earliest register is from Exeter where the first entry was the *Ann and Mary* registered on 26 August 1786. The owner was Charles Hodder of Topsham, mariner and he was also the Master. The ship, a square sterned sloop of 28 tons, with one deck and one mast, measured 38 ft. 2 inches in length and 14 ft. in breadth. The registration was cancelled the following year as the description was altered. Some forty-four ships were registered at Exeter between 26 August and 31 December 1786. When used in conjunction with the Exeter Wharfingers' accounts which exist for the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries in the Devon Record Office, they give important information on trade and shipowners and masters. It is a pity we do not have corresponding Registers of Merchants at this date!

In spite of Devon having two coastlines, the number of volumes for the County is not large and the records of no single port compare with those of Liverpool. However, registers of the following ports have been or are to be collected. The starting date of the registers is given in brackets.

Barnstaple	(1824)	Ilfracombe	(1824)
Bideford	(1831)	Plymouth	(1824)
Brixham	(1864)	Salcombe	(1867)
Dartmouth	(1824)	Teignmouth	(1853)
Exeter	(1786)		

The registers of Lyme Regis, which like Exeter begin in 1786 and were formerly in the Exeter Customs House, have been transferred to the Dorset County Record Office. All the Devon volumes are in the Devon Record Office in Exeter as the West Devon Record Office has no space to accommodate the Plymouth registers. With the exception of the Exeter registers, the volumes are kept at Marsh Barton and so it is necessary to give 24 hours' notice to view them in the Search Room in Castle Street.

THE DEVON HISTORY SOCIETY

Minutes of the Eleventh Annual General Meeting
held at Exeter on Saturday, 9th May 1981

1. The Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held on 10th May 1980 were read and approved.
2. Arising therefrom:
 - (i) **Devon Historic Buildings Trust**

The Chairman reported that the proposed scheme to restore the windmill at Paignton had now been abandoned and that it is proposed to renovate the Brewery premises in Well Street in Paignton. Cottages at Ottery St Mary, premises in Melbourne Street in Exeter and the Plains at Totnes are being investigated as possible future projects. The Chairman urged members from North Devon to put forward proposals for possible schemes in that area.
 - (ii) **Supplements to the Devon Union List (DUL)**

The Chairman announced that the first of the promised updates, the *Devon Bibliography for 1980*, had been published and was being distributed. It was proposed to include the Bibliography for 1981 in the Spring 1982 *Devon Historian*. The Hon. Editor reported that a pilot study had been made to establish the likely amount of work required to record books published since the *DUL* appeared. The feasibility of so doing had been proven and therefore it was virtually certain the work would be undertaken in due course. Votes of thanks were recorded to Mr Geoffrey Paley and the others who had made the publication of the 1980 volume possible.
 - (iii) **Meeting of Devon local history societies**

The Chairman stated that this meeting had not been held during the year because of the difficult financial position of the Society. It was hoped that this would now be arranged during the coming year.
3. The Hon. Secretary submitted a brief report on the situation which had arisen following the receipt of an account for over £500 for the printing of Issue 21 of the *Devon Historian*. (This was in addition to the sum of £577 already paid for Issue No. 20). He also outlined other problems and explained that the Council had authorised him to open an Emergency Account. He reported that £400 had been paid by instalments and that there was still a credit balance of £91.20 in this Account.
4. In the absence of the Hon. Treasurer, who had offered his resignation on taking up a new professional appointment, the Hon. Secretary submitted an interim unaudited financial statement. He stated that on 20th March 1981 the main account showed a balance of £117.15 and the Emergency Account £91.20. In addition some arrears and some advance payments of subscriptions had been banked which showed that the Society had total credit balances of £289.10.

The printers' outstanding account of £101.85 had still to be paid and there would be costs involved in the distribution of Issue 22. He felt that there was every hope the financial position would improve considerably during 1981-82. The Chairman explained how the Devon Bibliography for 1980 had been financed and expressed thanks to the Bristol & West Building Society, the Iverdean Trust and Devon Library Services who had made the production possible. He promised that there would be careful budgeting in future and that competitive estimates would be sought before printing of the *Devon Historian* was started. The Hon. Secretary asked members present to endorse his earlier policy of not sending copies of the *DH* to members in arrears or to those paying very out-of-date subscription rates. This was approved.

5. The new scale of subscriptions was approved:

Individual members	£5.00
Family membership	£6.00
Libraries, Museums, Schools and Record Offices	£5.00
Societies and organisations with over 100 members	£13.00
Other corporate members	£7.00

It was resolved that the cost of issues of the *Devon Historian* be fixed by the Council based on the actual unit-cost plus postage. Conference fees were confirmed at: Members 50p; Non-members 75p. It was further resolved that the question of covenanted subscriptions be investigated by the new Hon. Treasurer.

6. The Hon. Editor submitted her report. She outlined plans for future issues of the *Devon Historian* and appealed for names of members who would be willing to act as reviewers of books and pamphlets.

7. Election of Council

Council members elected are listed on the inside front cover of this issue. The Chairman submitted a resolution that members of the Executive Council in future serve for three years, one third retiring each year, and that retiring members be eligible for re-election. This was approved.

8. One-day conferences

It was reported that these had been arranged at:

Colyton, near Axminster	7th November 1981
Hatherleigh	27th February 1982

9. Publicity

Following a discussion Mr David Edmund offered to act as Hon. Publicity Officer for the Society. His offer was accepted unanimously by the members present.

10. Before the Meeting closed Mr Beards proposed a vote of thanks to the Chairman for his efforts during the past year which had been much appreciated by the members. This was carried with acclamation.

EARLY 18th CENTURY CIDER PRODUCTION AT BEARSCOMBE FARM SOUTH DEVON

Rosemary Robinson

Preserved among the Petre documents in the Devon Record Office is a bound manuscript book of farm accounts for 1724-1727 (123M/E633). It is listed among the documents for South Brent parish and contains details of two farms, Kerswell and Bearscombe. No mention is made in the book of the whereabouts of the two farms but it seems reasonable to assume that the Kerswell farm in question is the one in South Brent parish. It might have been argued that 'Bearscombe' is the farm of that name in the adjoining parish of Diptford. However, since this farm was paying 'rates' and 'taxes' to West Alvington it is more likely to have been the Bearscombe farm much further to the south near Kingsbridge. This conjecture is supported by the present owner's statement that his father sold off the Bearscombe land which lies in West Alvington parish because the tithes were higher than for any other part of the farm.

The accounts for Kerswell are very incomplete but those for Bearscombe are extensive and provide details of cider production. It is clear that cider was being made at Bearscombe in large quantities and shipped from Dartmouth.

The volume of cider produced on the farm is shown by the following entries:

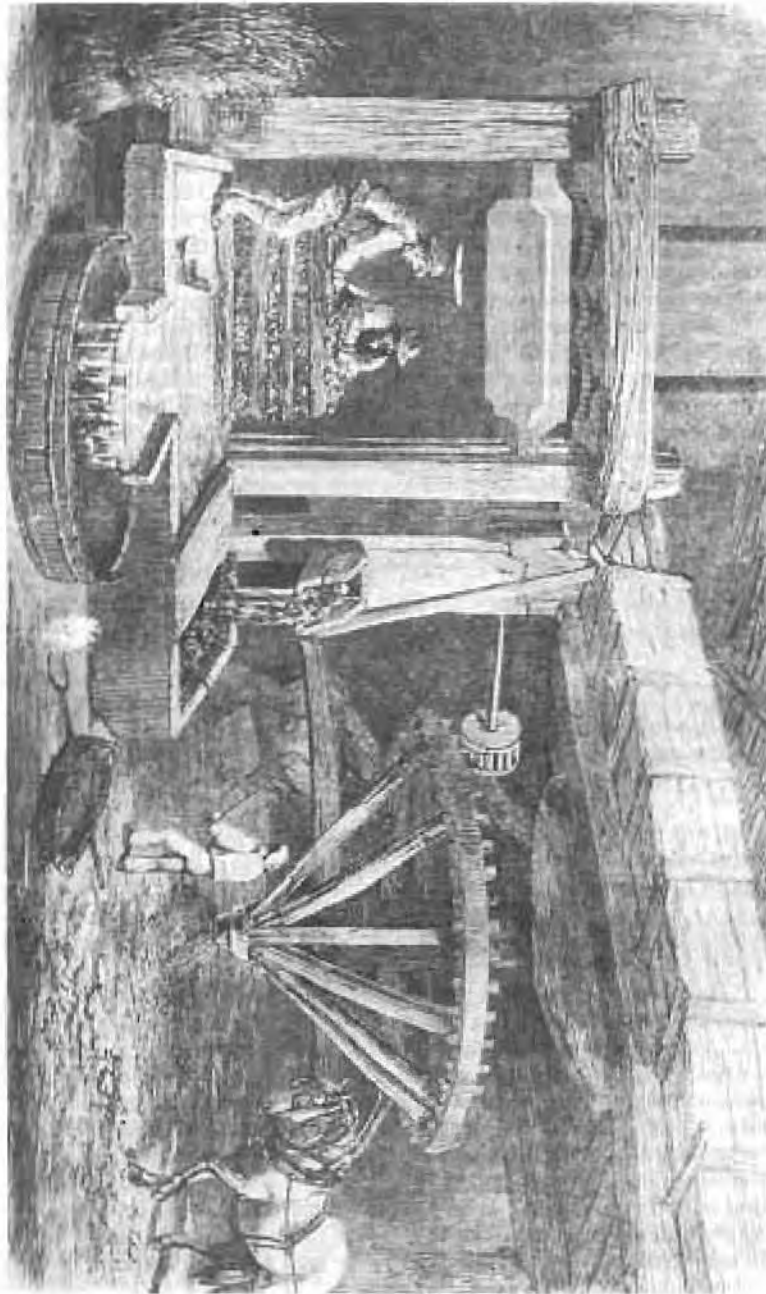
1725	Paid Theophilus Cole for his son-in-law making 41 hogsheads and other work	£4 9 2
	Paid for making 48 hogsheads	£5 8 0
1726	Paid for the freight of 20 hogsheads to Dartmouth	£2 2 0

It would seem that relatively small amounts were sold locally. The following are the only items of income from local sales:

1726	Received of Edmund Adams for a hogshead of cyder	£1 10 0
	Received of John Stidston for a Tun of cyder	£1 10 0
	.. of Elizabeth Bear for 2 hogsheads	15 0
1727	Rec'd of Mr Paddon for 5 hogsheads of cyder	£4 7 6
	Rec'd of Elianor Wannell for 1 ditto	17 0
	.. of Mr Sheston for 1 ditto	17 0

No other income from sales is recorded but it is probable that sales took place elsewhere. Allowance must also be made for a healthy consumption on the farm.

A hogshead is generally accepted to be between 50 and 60 gallons. Marshall writing in 1796 gives 63½ gallons (Marshall, p.215) while the O.E.D. gives 52½ gallons: the present owner of Bearscombe states that when cider was made on the farm a hogshead was reckoned to be six barrels or 60 gallons. He also states that a 'pipe' was two hogsheads or 120 gallons whereas the O.E.D. gives 105 gallons and Marshall calls a pipe a 'double hogshead'. It is even more difficult to find a definition of a 'tun'. The O.E.D. gives 252 gallons but it seems to have been used loosely to imply any large container or as a verb (as in the phrase below 'to tun the cider'). It would seem from all this that there was a certain amount of flexibility in the terms used for capacity.



Cider-making in Devon, 1850.
(Reproduced from E. W. Martin: *The secret people*, 1954.)

The following entries grouped together provide evidence for the trade from Dartmouth.

1725	Paid Mr Storey of Dartmouth for landing and de-cellarage of the pipestaves	5 0
	Paid for port charges	2 0
	Paid for men and plows to help the cyder to the waterside	£1 15 0
	Paid for 3 bills of lading & expenses	3 0
1726	Paid for the freight of 20 hogsheads to Dartmouth	£2 2 0

The entry mentioning 'men & plows' is puzzling. One can only guess that some sort of cart or perhaps lifting gear was involved. No reference in the standard works on agriculture (Marshall, 1796; Vancouver, 1808) seems to throw any light on it.

It is clear that apple crushing, if not the full process of cider making, was undertaken for neighbours.

1725	Received for pounding of cyder	15 0
	„ for pounding for Sam'l Pomroy	£1 0 0

An insight is also given into the production costs of the period. The rates for the actual gathering of the apples must have provided a paltry wage as the following entries show:

1725	Paid for Mary Jones and her daughter for 31 days & a half gathering apples	10 6
	Paid Mary Elliot for 9 days gathering apples	3 0
	Paid Ellin Squire for 21 days gathering apples	7 0
	Paid Eliza Pearse for 18 days gathering apples	6 0
	Paid 3 women 2 days to gather apples	2 0

Another entry reads:

1725	Paid for a tunner to tun the cyder	1 0
------	------------------------------------	-----

The pound itself seems to have needed maintenance but in what respect we are not told:

1724	August 1st. Paid Clement King for work on the pound	3 6
	Paid a mason & his son for 2 days work to mend the pound & garden walls	5 0

The pound must have needed frequent greasing as each year records:

1724	Paid for 3 pound of grease for the pound	1 0
1725	Paid for 3 pound of grease for the pound	1 0
1726	Paid for grease to the apple pound	6

Finally a few entries lead us through the final stages of production:

1725	Paid for a racking cock	7 6
	Paid for a sieve to strain the cyder	—
	Paid for Corke	2 6
1724	Paid Mr Stitson for pipestaves	£5 7 6
1725	Paid Mr Storey for 22 dozen of hoops	£1 2 0
	Paid for 22 dozen of hoops & fetching	£1 11 6
1726	Paid for hoops	10 0

Mr Storey of Dartmouth may have been a merchant or middle man in the cider trade. This seems to be suggested by the entry 'paid Mr Storey . . . for landing & de-cellarage of the pipestaves'. One would expect the metal barrel hoops to have been supplied by the local blacksmith but it seems that these too were supplied by Mr Storey.

At Bearscombe Farm today the ruins of a rectangular three storey stone building with an integral central wheelpit may be seen. The wheel was fed by a leat, now filled in, taken from the stream in the valley. The power from the wheel is stated by the present owner to have driven many items of farm machinery on the various floors. These included an apple crusher with corrugated granite rollers, on the ground floor, fed by a chute from the floor above, to which a wide door at the rear of the first floor gave access. (This could be reached by a cart as the building is built into the slope of the hill). There are also the remains of a large cider press nearby and a rectangular granite trough in which the juice from the press was caught. The owner describes how in his boyhood it took two of his father's employees most of the morning to crush enough apples for a pressing and prepare the 'mock'. This consisted of a stack of alternating apple pulp and best wheat reed under the press. After this they would return at intervals through the day to add another turn to the screw of the press and fill the barrels with the apple juice. A good day's production at Bearscombe was two hogsheads. The present owner also describes how as recently as 1945 apple crushing and pressing was undertaken for many neighbouring farms. It was at about this date that cider production ceased at Bearscombe, and judging from the apparent 19th-century date of the building and machinery cider had been made here in the same way for about a century. There is no sign of the earlier type of circular granite cider pound at the farm, nor is there knowledge of there ever having been one: however one must have existed if cider was made here in 1725.

Today one gnarled apple tree is all that remains of Bearscombe's extensive orchards and it stands as a reminder of a history of cider making that probably extends much further back in time than these accounts of the early 18th century illustrate.

Sources

Marshall, William. *Rural economy of the West of England*. 1796. Reprinted David and Charles, 1970.

Vancouver, Charles. *General view of the agriculture of Devon with observations on the means of its improvement*. 1808. Reprinted David and Charles, 1969.

Devon Record Office. 123M/E.633. Accounts relating to Bearscombe and Kerswell.

Acknowledgements

My thanks are due to the present owner of Bearscombe, Mr Kerswell, for his interest and for much information.

A STUDY OF SCHOOL LOG BOOKS FOR SELECTED EXETER SCHOOLS FROM 1863-1941

Virginia Locke

School log books provide one of the least studied sources of information on education. In 1862 the Revised Code of Regulations for Schools included a clause requiring Head Teachers to record briefly each day what had happened at their school in a Log Book. Reading them gives an insight into what schools were actually like in days gone by, seen through the eyes of someone who was present at the time. Much of the contents of Log Books deals with mundane day-to-day affairs of the running of the school, but from this one can get a good idea of the type of education children received, and how their school-days were spent. By examining Log Books of three Exeter schools - Exeter Episcopal Girls School, Mint Lane Wesleyan Boys School and Heavitree Parochial Boys School from 1863 to 1913, one can see how schools and education changed.

This article is based on the Log Books. Complete records are available for these schools and as they are very different in character, location and denomination, they provide an interesting cross-section to study. The main interest of School Log Books lies in the events that Head Teachers considered worthy of recording. The Codes of Regulations for schools, which laid down rules about the keeping of Log Books, specified some subjects which the Principal Teachers were to cover in their entries. As with the other regulations concerning Log Books, these were altered from time to time - in 1862, 1875, 1889 and 1893.

Although not specified as a subject to be written about in the Code of Regulations until 1889, many entries deal with the level of attendance and the reasons for absence. Even before school attendance was made compulsory, it was frequently commented on. In the earlier years, until about 1878 entries were of a general nature, just stating whether attendance was small or large. For example, this entry for Heavitree Parochial School on 3 April 1868:

'Attendance today rather small.'

As time went by entries relating to attendance became more detailed. Average numbers per week were often given. For example, the entry for Heavitree Parochial School for 23 February 1883:

'Average attendance: 114.3'

The Log Book entries often give reasons for poor attendance. In the early period particularly, bad weather conditions are often given as an explanation of poor attendance, probably due to the fact that children had to walk long distances to school. The entry for the Mint Wesleyan School on 15 August 1863, reads:

'Very thin attendance in the afternoon on account of the weather being exceedingly wet.'

Another reason given for absence was illness. There is no noticeable tendency for the number of entries dealing with illness to decline or increase over the fifty years studied, or to be more frequent in one school than another. A third reason for absence seems to have been the presence of outside attractions which the children preferred to attend. For example, attendance was often poor at the beginning of term because children were still away on holiday, as can be seen from this entry for the Exeter Episcopal School on 29 July 1878:

'A very poor attendance. Many children have not come back from the holiday.'

Children were also absent from school because they were working, particularly

at harvest time. For example, the entry for Heavitree Parochial School on 5 August 1868 read:

'Many others gleaned or at work in the Harvest field.'

The references to outside attractions causing absence, declined with the more formal approach to education and the fact that it was made compulsory and free.

The attitude of the Head Teachers to attendance also altered over the period, as did the measures that they took to deal with it. In the early years they tended to lament a low attendance, but they had no power to do anything about it. In 1868 the Head Teacher of Heavitree Parochial School began to give Reward Tickets for regular attendance and on 9 March he noted:

'Children much more punctual in their attendance since Reward Tickets have been given for regular and punctual attendance.'

Later in the period measures for chasing up errant scholars became more organised. One method used was the sending of forms to the parents of boys who only attended school irregularly enquiring why they were absent. For example, an entry for Heavitree Parochial School on 2 March 1893 reads:

'Sent out forty Enquiry (absence) Sheets to houses of absentees this afternoon.'

These absence enquiry forms were frequently mentioned from 1893 onwards in the Log Books of the Heavitree Parochial School. However, the other two schools do not seem to have adopted this method of chasing up truants. This is a good example of a matter being given much more attention in one school's Log Books than in another's. In the Heavitree Parochial School there are many records made of attempts to get children to come to school and to visits by the School Attendance Officer and the existence of a School Attendance Committee. In the Exeter Episcopal School such references are far less frequent, and in the Mint Wesleyan School, which had the highest percentage of attendance in the city in 1907, they are virtually non-existent. It may be because Heavitree Parochial School had higher rates of absenteeism and therefore more measures were needed to deal with the problem. However, a more probable reason could be that Heavitree Parochial School had the same Head Teacher from 1883 onwards, when the first references to chasing up truants are made. It would seem likely that Mr Isaacs felt this matter worthy of recording and therefore devoted considerable space to it. Thus in the Log Book entries reflect the changing attitude to attendance at a time when laws were being passed to make schooling compulsory.

The 1862 and 1875 Codes of Regulations specified dates of withdrawals as one topic on which Head Teachers could make entries. However, it was not included in the later Regulations, and admissions were never mentioned at all. Despite this, the names or numbers of children entering and leaving the school are given for all three schools in most years. These entries show that, particularly in the early part of our period, children joined and left the school throughout the year. The modern tendency for virtually all children to join at the start of a new term and leave at the end of a term was not practised to any extent before about 1900. The only exception to this would seem to be the Exeter Episcopal School in the 1860s when Court Days were held once a month when children would be admitted or withdrawn. Another feature of the earlier entries relating to admissions is the number of re-admissions. Children would leave the school and then return at a later date. For example, this entry for Heavitree Parochial School on 2 November 1868:

'Re-admitted Mrs Bolt's three boys to the two lower classes. They have

been employed in the brickyard since last February and seem to have forgotten all they had previously learnt.'

The reasons why children are withdrawn are quite often given. Most commonly, because the parents have moved to a different area, the child had to go to another school. Then, children were sometimes moved from one school to another within Exeter which presumably indicates that parents were not satisfied with the education their child was receiving, although there may have been other considerations such as cost and convenience of situation. A third reason was financial, either the parents could no longer afford the fees or the child was needed to go out to work to supplement the family income. For example, this entry for Exeter Episcopal School on 11 October 1878:

'Harriet Ball (Standard 2) withdrawn as mother cannot afford the fee.'

The number of entries relating to admissions does not vary very much from year to year, and from school to school.

The 1862 and 1875 Codes said that 'commencements of duty of new teachers' could be noted. Head Teachers seem to have been fairly consistent in always noting when a teacher left or joined a school, although this was only compulsory until 1889. An entry for the Mint Wesleyan School on 13 January 1888:

'Miss Kathleen Perrian from Topsham Board School (born 7/4/1865) entered on her duty as Assistant Mistress.'

Lists of the staff were entered after the Inspector's report in the School Log Books as laid down in the Regulations. The 1889 and 1893 Codes both said that failure of duty on the part of any school staff should be noted. For example, this entry for Heavitree Parochial School on 30 March 1908:

'Changed Mr Day from Standard 1 to Standard 2 and Mr Scobell from Standard 2 to Standard 1, owing to the unsatisfactory work of the former.'

One of the most frequent criticisms made about the staff was their unpunctuality in arriving at the school. One Head Teacher of the Mint Wesleyan School took to timing the Pupil Teachers to see how often and by how much they were late. He recorded on 25 June 1878:

'Told the Pupil Teachers that in future the number of times that they were late during the week would be entered against them.'

The 1862 and 1875 Codes did not require Head Teachers to mention anything relating to the curriculum. However both the 1889 and 1893 Codes contain a clause stating that entries should be made on 'such events as the introduction of new books, apparatus or course of instruction, any plan of lessons approved by the Inspector'. However, throughout the period the Head Teachers entered in their Log Books what lessons were being taught, when any new subjects are introduced and any alterations to the Time-table. During the period 1863-1914 the curriculum seems to become much broader. In the earlier years the references made by Head Teachers to the lessons being taught were mainly to the 'three R's', singing, geography and history. As time goes by the range of lessons was broadened and new subjects were introduced. For example, on 14 January 1878 an Exeter Episcopal School entry reads:

'French will be taught this year to all who wish to learn.'

And on 16 April 1913 the Head Master of Heavitree Parochial School records:

'Boys in the Gardening class had their first lesson this afternoon.'

There were many other references to the introduction of new subjects and the

curriculum was constantly being extended during this period.

The system of examinations and inspections was not as in schools today. The 1875, 1889 and 1893 Codes of Regulations all laid down that the summary of the Inspector's report after his annual visit and any surprise visit, should be entered in the Log Book. In fact, in the schools studied, this was done from 1873 onwards. Much importance seems to have been attached by the Head Teachers to preparing for Her Majesty's Inspector's visit and timetables were sometimes altered to allow extra time to be given to weak subjects. Little account is actually given of what occurred at an inspection, but a fairly good impression can be obtained from the reports the Inspectors made. The children were asked questions on the various subjects they studied, they usually prepared a special song to perform, and the Inspectors noted such things as discipline.

In addition to the Government Inspection, each school also had an annual inspection by another body. The Heavitree Parochial School and the Exeter Episcopal Girls School, which were Church of England schools, were inspected by a Diocesan Inspector and the Mint Wesleyan School by the Inspector for schools for the Wesleyan Education Committee.

The children seem to have been examined in particular subjects by visiting examiners. These exams did not take place as nowadays, at one or two particular times of the year, and the range of the subjects in which children took these external exams seems limited – singing, religious knowledge and drawing being the three principal subjects. The Head Teachers of all three schools also conducted their own internal exams at fairly frequent intervals, mainly to check the progress the children were making. For example, this entry for Heavitree Parochial School on 7 March 1873:

'Monthly examination on Wednesday morning. Dictation below fair in all the classes. Reading good excepting in the second class, arithmetic not accurate in the third and fourth classes.'

The subject of holidays is not mentioned in the Codes of Regulations as one on which Head Teachers should make entries. However there are quite frequent entries in the Log Books of all three schools stating when holidays occurred and if for any special reason. The ordinary school holidays were much shorter than those enjoyed by children today but there was a larger number of half-holidays, particularly on religious occasions. For example, this entry for Heavitree Parochial School on 1 June 1878:

'Boys attended church on Ascension morning and had the half holiday in the afternoon.'

Holidays also tended to be given after examinations and inspections, and on important public occasions. An entry for the Mint Wesleyan School on 5 July 1893 noted:

'Closed school for the week owing to the Royal Wedding.'

Towards the end of the period the number of occasional half-holidays tended to decline as the whole approach to education became more formal. By 1908 the Head Teacher of Heavitree Parochial School even had to write to His Majesty's Inspector and the secretary of the Education Committee to tell them when holidays were going to take place.

The topic of discipline was not specifically mentioned in the Code of Regulations as a subject on which entries should be made, although the 1862 and 1875 Codes did require 'cautions' to be written about. However from time to time the

Head Teachers of all three schools made entries giving information about something a child had done wrong and how he had been punished. The main offences seem to have been stealing, cheating, swearing and late or non-attendance. There are a few entries mentioning children being expelled from school, although unfortunately little detail is given describing what the children had done to deserve this most serious of all school punishments. For example, this entry on 16 September 1873 in the Exeter Episcopal School Log Book:

'Frances Ward expelled on account of misconduct.'

The subject of health was commented on by Head Teachers in their Log Book entries. All the Codes of Regulations included illness as a topic which could be written about. Such things as colds, measles and whooping cough are frequently mentioned. However it would seem that the sickness that most affected children in the period 1863-1914 was scarlet fever, which has largely died out now. This disease reached epidemic proportions in Exeter from time to time, reflected in the fact that it is mentioned at about the same time in the Log Book entries of several schools. The decline of child mortality over the last hundred years can also be seen from study of school Log Books. Today a pupil's death is very rare, yet in 1903, for example, there are entries relating to the deaths of three pupils in the Log Book of the Heavitree Parochial School. A third aspect of Log Book entries relating to health is the increasing attention paid to public health during our period. For example, in the Log Book of the Heavitree Parochial School there is a record of a Sanitary Inspector's visit to the school:

'Sanitary Inspector visited to acquaint Master of families suffering from scarlet fever.'

However, it is only in the twentieth century that health measures really gain prominence. Medical inspections were given to children in school as one can see from this entry for Exeter Episcopal School on 9 November 1908:

'Children admitted since the summer holidays underwent medical examination, parents being present.'

After 1900 there are also many references to the visit of the School Medical Officer to all three schools. He was responsible for keeping a general eye on the health of the children.

A study of these Log Book entries shows that Head Teachers were not particularly concerned to make entries relating only to subjects mentioned in the Codes of Regulations. Also, although the Log Books of all three schools cover basically the same subjects, the emphasis varies from school to school.

This essay has only scratched the surface of the work that could be done on school log books, not only in Exeter, but also nationally, but it is hoped that the detail of study on a few schools in specific years does provide a picture of what actually happened in the schools studied, and an indication of what probably happened in other schools.

Sources:

Heavitree Parochial Boys School, 1863-87, 1887-97, 1897-1923 (Devon Record Office (DRO) 76/6/1/1-3)
Mint Lane Wesleyan School, 1863-92 (DRO 68/4/1/1)
Exeter Episcopal School, 1863-94, 1908-35 (DRO 72/15/1/4-6)

LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETIES IN DEVON

Corrections and additions to the list of societies given in DH 21. Many thanks to the members who took the trouble to write with information.

Canonsleigh Local History Group	Secretary: P. J. Walter, Eastbrook, Burlescombe, Tiverton.
Chudleigh Amenity Society	Secretary: John A. Clark, Overhills, Parade, Chudleigh, Newton Abbot.
Chulmleigh Local History Society	Secretary: Mrs Barbara Mann, Goodcott, Ashbreigney, Chulmleigh EX18 7NE,
Devon and Cornwall Notes & Queries	Secretary: N. Annett, 4, Pine Close, Broomhill, Tiverton.
Ivybridge Local History Group	Secretary: B. Nicholls, Ivy Cottage, Crescent Road, Ivybridge.
Sid Vale Association	Secretary: C. W. Green, Old Barn Cottage, Salcombe Regis.
Wesley Historical Society (Plymouth and Exeter Branch)	Secretary: Roger Thorne, 11, Station Road, Topsham.
Devon Record Office, Castle Street, Exeter, EX4 3PQ	Head of Record Services: Mrs M. M. Rowe
West Devon Record Office, 14, Tavistock Place, Plymouth, PL4 8AN	

EARLY BOOK TRADE IN DEVON

Ian Maxted is interested in receiving details of items printed or published in Devon before 1801, apart from those works already represented in the major public collections in the County and listed in the "Devon Union List". He has already collected details of about one thousand books, pamphlets and broadsheets which he hopes to use in a study of the early book trade in Devon. Could readers owning, or knowing the location of, any items which may be of interest, please send details of author, title, edition, publisher and date to him at the Westcountry Studies Library, Castle Street, Exeter.

ILLEGITIMACY AND BRIDAL PREGNANCY IN OTTERY ST. MARY, 1602-1837

Ena Cumming

Where relatively complete and detailed parish registers exist they have enabled historians to study our demographic past in considerable detail in the period before the introduction of Civil Registration in 1837. Whilst marital fertility has been one aspect of demographic history to which historians have previously directed much attention, this paper examines the related features of illegitimacy and bridal pregnancy in Ottery St Mary over a period spanning more than two centuries, as revealed by an analysis of the parish registers.

The method adopted to extract the information was to count all entries in the baptism register which stated specifically that a particular child was illegitimate. Nine further entries, which were attributed to a mother only with no father mentioned, were inferred to be illegitimate. Foundling children were not counted, nor were children of women widowed up to nine months prior to the baptism entry. The burial register was also searched and a note made of all child burials which were recorded as being bastard or base children. The list of bastards taken from the baptism register was then matched with the list extracted from the baptism register. This revealed that there were many burial entries of bastard children for whom

Table 1
Illegitimacy ratios, 1602-1837

Period	Baptisms	No. of bastards baptised	No. of bastards dying unbaptised	Total bastards	ratio 1 per cent	ratio 2 per cent
1602-20	1347	26	—	26	1.9	—
1621-40	1826	29	4	33	1.6	1.8
1641-60 ^a	1404	10	3	13	0.7	0.9
1661-80	1705	21	2	23	1.2	1.3
1681-1700	1572	26	1	27	1.7	1.7
1701-20	978	29	—	29	3.0	—
1721-40 ^b	606	24	1	25	4.0	4.1
1741-60	1298	52	9	61	4.0	4.7
1761-80	1245	66	16	82	5.3	6.5
1781-1800	1305	75	22	97	5.7	7.3
1801-20*	1695	58	15	73	3.4	4.3
1821-37*	1634	71	—	71	4.3	—

* After 1813 entries in the burial register did not disclose whether children were illegitimate or otherwise.

a excluding years 1646-50

b excluding years 1728-30

Illegitimacy ratio 1 — based on bastards baptised only.

Illegitimacy ratio 2 — based on bastards baptised and those dying unbaptised.

there was no previous baptismal entry. This was particularly the case in the second half of the eighteenth century, when as many as 25 per cent of all bastard children entered in the burial register had not been baptised.

On the basis of the information gleaned from both baptism and burial registers, two sets of illegitimacy ratios have been calculated – one based on entries in the baptism register only, whilst the second has been derived by adding those bastard children dying unbaptised to those listed in the baptism register, adjusting the number of baptisms accordingly. The two ratios are set out in table 1 and presented graphically in figure 1.

Perhaps the most salient feature revealed by an examination of the data is the downward trend in the first half of the seventeenth century which reaches its lowest point in the middle decades of the century, before starting on an upward path to reach the very high point prevailing at the end of the eighteenth century. Where burials of unbaptised bastards are consistently recorded in the second half of the eighteenth century, the illegitimacy ratio is substantially increased by taking them into account, particularly in the 1780s and 90s, when more than seven per cent of all infants were born out of wedlock.

• Figure 1
Illegitimacy ratios, Ottery St Mary, 1602-1837



A recent national study of the history of illegitimacy by Peter Laslett¹ has drawn attention to a basic wave-like movement in the illegitimacy curve between the sixteenth and nineteenth centuries. In the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century the illegitimacy ratio was at a relatively high level, exceeding four per cent. From this point it started to fall, reaching a low point of half of one per cent in the 1650s, before rising again to more than six per cent by the end of the eighteenth century. In most respects the history of illegitimacy in Ottery St Mary appears to conform closely to this national pattern. Whilst the relatively high illegitimacy ratio of the early seventeenth century is not so pronounced in Ottery as it is in the national study, the same wave-like movement can be seen.

A further aspect of the Laslett study is the suggestion that as illegitimacy increased so there was an increase in the number of women who gave birth to more than one illegitimate child – the so-called 'repetitive bastard-bearers'.² The analysis of the parish registers readily revealed that this feature was present in Ottery St Mary. It can be seen illustrated in table 2.

Table 2
Ottery St Mary
Proportion of repetitive bastard-bearing

	1602-45	1651-1700	1701-1837
Total bastards	65	57	438
Total in groups of one	47	49	316
Total in groups of two	18	8	66
Total in groups of three	30
Total in groups of four	16
Total in groups of five	10
per cent repeaters	28	14	28

The wave-like movement seen in the illegitimacy ratio is reflected in these figures. Although the early period and the late period show exactly the same proportion of repeaters, there are marked differences. In the early period the evidence contained in the parish registers indicates that no one woman gave birth to more than two bastards, whereas by the late period, when the great upward surge in illegitimacy occurred, the number of women who gave birth to three, four and even five bastards is particularly striking. In the middle period of low illegitimacy only four women produced more than one illegitimate child.

The name of the father of each illegitimate child is not consistently recorded in the parish register, but at certain periods, in particular during the second half of the eighteenth century, fathers are named. This information reveals that the repetitive bastard-bearers appear to fall into two distinct groups. There were those who had several children by the same man, indicating that whilst the couple were not legally married a stable relationship existed. One example is that of Ann Lathrop who produced four bastards by John Seaward between 1789 and 1794.

The couple eventually married in 1795, four months before the fifth child was born, and went on to produce a further four children in the ensuing years.

The other type of repeaters were girls who produced several bastards by different men, like Jane Riggs who had four bastards by three different men; or Sarah Dyer who, between 1771 and 1778, also produced four bastards – two by a Mr Thomas Glanville, described in the register as 'Attorney at Law', one by Mr John Glanville, also an Attorney at Law, whilst paternity of her fourth bastard is ascribed in the register to Mr Thomas Glanville *and* Mr John Glanville. Thomas Glanville was also responsible for the illegitimate children of two other girls.

Certain family names appear to be closely associated with repetitive bastard-bearing. An Edith Bond produced two bastards in the early seventeenth century, and an Elizabeth Bond gave birth to four around the end of the eighteenth century. The names of Dyer, Lathrop and Hare were particularly prevalent in this respect; five Dyer girls produced ten bastards between 1730 and 1820, whilst five Lathrop girls also produced ten over a period covering half a century. Seven girls of the Hare family gave birth to eleven bastards, three of the mothers being themselves illegitimate.³

A feature closely related to illegitimacy is that of bridal pregnancy. Fluctuations in the number of brides who were pregnant show the same wave-like movement over the same period. The data is set out in table 3, showing the percentage of first births which occurred within eight and a half months of marriage.

Table 3

Bridal pregnancy in Ottery St Mary

Period	No. of marriages investigated	Percentage traced to maternity	Percentage of maternities within 8½ months of marriage
1602-10	183	64	33
1653-58	137	74	20(a)
1715-19	127	45	22
1745-49	123	53	35
1785-90	111	51	48(b)
1816-20	114	53	51

(a) based on dates of birth

(b) 56 per cent dates of birth; 44 per cent baptism dates.

Here again, the relatively high level of bridal pregnancy in the early seventeenth century is reduced to a much lower level in mid-century, but subsequently rises with each successive period to reach a very high point in the early nineteenth century, when over half the brides marrying in Ottery parish church were pregnant.

During the Commonwealth period registration in Ottery was particularly good; not only were dates of birth recorded, (which allowed the extent of bridal pregnancy to be gauged with more certainty than it can be when only baptism dates are given) but George Axe, the parish registrar, also recorded the births and baptisms

of Ottery children who were baptised at neighbouring parish churches. This allowed a high proportion of marriages to be traced to maternity. It also revealed several pregnant brides who went to a neighbouring parish to have their first child baptised, but whose subsequent children were baptised at Ottery. The harsh punishments imposed by the Puritan authorities on those indulging in pre-marital sexual activity were no doubt behind this. With the threat of the House of Correction hanging over those breaking the codes, the young couples perhaps felt it politic to have a pre-maritally conceived child baptised where they were not known.

Changes in the extent of premarital sexual activity in the era of parochial registration are expressed in the varying levels of illegitimacy, bridal pregnancy and repetitive bastard-bearing. In this respect, the history of Ottery St Mary appears to conform quite closely to wider, national trends. This paper seeks to do no more than set out the figures gleaned from the parish registers. Explanation of the changing social attitudes and customs which underlie the figures is a more complex matter.

Notes:

1. Peter Laslett, *Family life and illicit love in earlier generations*. (Cambridge University Press, 1977).
2. Laslett, *Family life*, p.147.
3. The feature of repetitive bastard-bearing being common to certain families has also been found at Colyton and Hemyoke in Somerset. See Laslett, *Family life*, p.149.

NOTES ON NEW CONTRIBUTORS:

Ena Cumming is a postgraduate student in Exeter University's Department of Economic History, preparing a thesis on demographic and economic aspects of some East Devon parishes.

Virginia Locke graduated from Exeter University last year. Her article is a shortened version of the local history essay she wrote as part of her course in the Department of Economic History.

Gertrude Morey is a retired teacher and member of the South Molton Archive which was formed three years ago to research the history of the area. Records are being collected, documents in the local museum catalogued, a photographic archive of old buildings assembled and talks given to local associations. (Secretary: Mr W. H. Pearce – see List of Societies in *DH 21*).

Rosemary Robinson is a housewife and her article on cider-making is a 'spin-off' from her work on the parish checklist for South Brent (published by DCRA, 1980)

REVIEWS

The Accounts of the Fabric of Exeter Cathedral, 1279-1353, part 1: 1279-1326, edited with an Introduction by Audrey M. Erskine, Devon and Cornwall Record Society, New Series, vol. 24, 1981. Available from the Assistant Secretary, D & CRS, 7 The Close, Exeter. £8, including postage.

The Accounts of the Fabric of Exeter Cathedral, often more shortly referred to as the Fabric Rolls, form one of the more complete series of English medieval building accounts. They run in irregular sequence from 1279 to 1514. The series opens with an incomplete summary covering the period 1279-87. This is included in the present volume, together with the annual accounts for 1299-1300, 1301-4, 1306-7, 1308-11, 1312-3, 1316-22 and 1323-6 and separate altar accounts for 1316-7 and 1318-22. A second volume is promised for 1982; it will cover the long episcopate of John Grandison (1327-69), in which the last account is that for 1352-3. It is intended in this second part to 'relate the documents to the progress of the building' and to cover other general topics; it will also include a glossary and index.

The present edition is a translation with the original Latin given in brackets when a term is first used and on other occasions when the context is important. 'Whenever a transcription or translation is in doubt or a whole phrase seems to be of particular significance the Latin is quoted fully.' The whole procedure, including the conventions used by the editor is fully and lucidly explained in the introduction to the present volume. The original Latin text is much abbreviated and technical and the exact form of the extension is often in doubt. The method adopted allows the specialist to judge the accuracy of the translation and in those rare cases when doubt may arise the transcript on which the edition is based remains available in Exeter Cathedral Library. With this safeguard the publication of a translation, rather than the original text is much to be preferred. The Latin would have had to be printed either with a multitude of unresolved suspensions or with many extensions of doubtful validity. Only a scholar with an wide and deep knowledge of the whole series would be qualified to provide a translation, which is necessarily an interpretation; but it is to be doubted whether anyone would be able to challenge Mrs Erskine's competence in this field. The method also allows the relegation of the lists of payments to individual workmen to a series of tables, a more useful form for consultation.

The importance of the accounts here published is enhanced by the fact that the building to which they relate survives with little structural alteration, though the original furniture has largely disappeared. It was one of the outstanding buildings of its age in the eyes of its contemporaries. In 1328, John Grandison, the new Bishop of Exeter, was able to report to Pope John XXII, his consecration of the high altar, which he found already completed. He added: 'May your holy Grace (*Caritas*) know that your church of Exeter, now almost half finished, . . . will, if it be brought to completion, shine forth with a splendour marvellous to behold, surpassing others of its kind in the kingdoms of both England and France.' It is true that the new bishop was seeking papal aid to carry on the work. But his exordium may be compared with the sober assessment of Geoffrey Webb in the Pelican History of Art: 'the two great enterprises of the second half of the thirteenth century - Lincoln presbytery and the beginnings of Exeter. . .'; the structure of

the added Lady Chapel and presbytery were virtually complete when the series of yearly accounts begins. In 1303/4 Master Walter was paid for glazing the gable window of the presbytery, eight clerestory windows and six in the aisles (p.35). It remained to link up the added work with the older crossing and of this there is evidence in the present volume, e.g. the cost of glass and the stalls (p.49), the glass for two of the clerestory windows in the western bays of the quire and the 'removal of the stalls'.

Perhaps the most interesting single piece of the furnishing recorded in the present volume is 'the altar, viz. the stone tablature.' This was a magnificent screen at the east end of the presbytery, against which the high altar was placed with a narrow sacristy at the back. A conjectural restoration was published by Percy Morris, showing the screen with a solid lower stage and an upper stage, 'a light open screen with statuary in canopied niches capped with spires of clustered pinnacles'; it reached as high as the sill of the east window. It is good to have the whole surviving record of this great work in print, even though much that is relevant was available in excerpts when Morris wrote forty years (*Ant. Journ.*, xxiii (1943), 22-47 and xxiv (1943), 10-21). The only comparable structure that survives is the Neville Screen at Durham. A generation later than Exeter the arrangement was repeated at Glastonbury by Abbot Monington. The plan has been recovered by excavation and a record of the abbot's works states that: 'he ornamented the high altar with twenty-two statues and as many niches, all painted.'

C. A. Ralegh Radford.

A History of Education in Chardstock, 1712-1979, P. J. Wood. 56 p. A4; obtainable from the author, Primary School, Chardstock, Axminster. £1.25 + 42p postage.

Mr. Wood, as headmaster of the present school, is heir to what remains of probably the most remarkable educational complex in any Devon village. A school of some sort existed before 1712; but the real story begins with the arrival of Charles Woodcock as Vicar and the building of the National School in 1839. To this in 1849 he added an Industrial School, initially to train girls for service (mainly, it appears, by doing the chores of the vicarage) but later also open to boys; and finally in 1858 'St. Andrew's College', a middle-class school offering 'a sound education, either Classical or English' to the sons of farmers and superior tradesmen. The Industrial School meanwhile was much expanded to take orphans of the Crimean War and Indian Mutiny, who overflowed the premises and were boarded out. The orphans spent part of their time in the National School, and the rest doing the many menial jobs of the whole establishment.

A remarkable complex of buildings resulted, of the plan and appearance of which much is known and shown in detail; but its life was short. In 1874 the 'College' was transferred to Salisbury, apparently because of the impossibility of finding freehold land in Chardstock and the desire to orient it rather to the sons of clergy; and by this time the supply of Crimean and Mutiny orphans had also inevitably ceased. It briefly reopened under different auspices as a private venture in 1876, but failed to pay its way and finally closed in 1886, leaving a mass of buildings for which no use was ever found and most of which had eventually to be

demolished. The National School however continued to flourish, and is well documented in logbook and other sources.

Until 1896 Chardstock was in Dorset, and until 1978 in Salisbury Diocese, and consequently Mr Wood has had to search widely to collect his material. This he has most creditably done, in public and diocesan records and in Dorset and Somerset newspapers, as well as in sources available in the parish and in Devon. The result is a most interesting account of a very remarkable phenomenon, well illustrated, and well printed by the County Printing Department (which might, however, have done a better job on the paste-up). It can be warmly recommended to anyone interested in educational history.

R. R. Sellman

The cannibals of Clovelly, fact or fiction? by Anthony D. Hippisley Coxe, Bideford: Bideford Community College, Abbotsham Road, 1981. 9, 8p. Recommended price 30p.

For many years now the tale of the Clovelly cannibals has awakened a morbid curiosity among visitors and residents in north Devon. Now, in an attractively produced booklet, the original legend is made widely available in a facsimile of the rare chapbook *The history of John Gregg and his family of robbers and murderers*. The accompanying text makes fascinating reading, especially when it is learned that precisely the same tale is told of one Sawney Beane, who lived with his family in Galloway. The problem of the relationship of the two legends is complicated by the fact that early printers did not normally date their ephemeral products. Ronald Holmes in *The legend of Sawney Beane* (1975) dates the four earliest surviving chapbooks at about 1700, almost certainly far too early, as examination of the imprints will show. The Jollie family, for example, are recorded as printers in Carlisle only from the 1780s. J. Ferraby is recorded in Hull in the 1780s, and the imprint "London: Printed and sold in Aldermay Church-yard" probably refers to Cluer Dicey, established there by 1763. In fact the earliest appearance in print of the Sawney Beane legend was probably in 1734 in *A general and true history of the lives and actions of the most famous highwaymen...* by Captain Charles Johnson. Johnson was none other than Daniel Defoe, who had previously visited north Devon, as he related in his *Tour through the whole island of Great Britain*. However, he made no mention of the Clovelly cannibals in his account of the tour. This negative evidence is reinforced by the date assigned by the British Library to their copy, now missing, of the John Gregg version: "Newcastle? 1770?" If the British Library copy is the same edition as the version reproduced by Mr. Hippisley Coxe, there is little to contradict this date. The printer did not place his name on the publication, but there is nothing in the typographical style inconsistent with a date in the 1770s or even later. Analysis of the text too shows that the Gregg legend is almost certainly derivative of the Sawney Beane version. To fit the text into a smaller format phrases are shortened, and towards the middle two extensive passages are deleted. However the final paragraphs show less abridgement: clearly as he neared the end of the text the printer realised that he had enough space to set the remainder as it stood. In the Gregg version too the journey of the captured family of cannibals from the prison in Edinburgh to their execution

in Leith, a distance of only one or two miles, is replaced by an improbable trek from Exeter to Plymouth, a hazardous undertaking with a band of some fifty desperate robbers and murderers. The explanation given in the pamphlet for the transposition of the legend from Scotland to Clovelly is not entirely convincing. Smugglers would not scare local inhabitants away from caves filled with their contraband by drawing their attention to supposed monstrous inhabitants long since captured and executed. By broadcasting such a legend in print they would rather encourage hardier souls to search for possible remains of the cannibals' spoils of "money, watches, rings, swords, pistols..." The moving spirit in the production of the legend was surely not the smugglers but the printers. "There's nothing beats a stunning good murder, after all" said the running patterer to Henry Mayhew, and many of the catchpenny broadsheets sold on the London streets had been hawked for many years virtually unchanged. A new title and a new setting would enable the ballad mongers to pass off an old tale as "something completely different." This booklet provides an interesting sidelight on the development of folk literature and the recommended price of 30p is more than reasonable. Intending purchasers should bear in mind that proceeds will benefit the Clovelly lifeboat and adjust their payments accordingly.

Ian Maxted

Exeter Coinage, by John Andrews, William Elston & Norman Shiel. Exeter Industrial Archaeology Group, 1980. 84 p. 120 illus., 1 map. £2.40. ISBN 0 906231 027.

The Exeter local historian as well as the numismatist will find this booklet a very useful aid to their studies, and it will make them aware of the many branches of numismatics.

The subjects covered include not only coins struck in the three periods of mints in Exeter, from Saxon times to the great recoinage of William III's reign, but also unofficial trade tokens. These, mostly of a farthing denomination, were issued for use locally in and around Exeter from the seventeenth to the nineteenth century. Together with the advertisement tickets and pub checks the tokens introduce the reader to the merchants, shop-keepers and inns of a bygone Exeter.

The medal section, which lists about twenty items related to the city, includes the Police Long Service award and commemorative and prize medals such as that of the Botanical & Horticultural Society and ones from several schools of the district.

Brief records of a dozen private banks are given, with details of the notes they issued, mostly between 1760 and 1835, and these recall many individual financial failures during that period.

The book is well illustrated by Mr. Andrews' photographs and the joint authors have researched through many national, county and private collections to make their listings as complete as possible. A detailed bibliography and map of Victorian pubs are included. The different sections will remind the reader that these many issues of coinage were prompted by necessity and reflect the economic conditions and local history of Exeter in various ages past.

W. A. Passmore

The Monmouth rebellion: a social history, by W. MacDonald Wigfield. 176p. Bradford on Avon, Moonraker Press, 1980. £7.95. ISBN 239 00195 8.

W. MacDonald Wigfield, a retired headmaster at Ilminster, has pored for many years over the stories of survivors of Monmouth's rising. His keen historical interest, stiffened by religious and humane considerations, has induced him to seek to offer the rebels through detailed research a memorial adequate to 'their devotion and courage'. The results are impressive. His well-produced book provides a clear account of two campaigns — the military one that culminated at Sedgemoor, the judicial one — conducted so ruthlessly by George Jeffreys — that led to prison, execution or transportation. The whole is rounded off by a solid bibliography, apt illustrations, a guide to the battlefield of Sedgemoor and the full text of Nathaniel Wade's valuable 'Narrative' or Confession transcribed from B. L. Harleian Ms 6854, hitherto only imperfectly published. (Wade was pardoned and, indeed, James II made him Town Clerk of Bristol in 1687, to help him woo the protestant dissenters there.) Though Mr. Wigfield's brief introductory summary of the pre-history of the rebellion contains some doubtful generalisations, his scholarship on the events themselves is mostly meticulous. Besides modifying with some conviction interpretations by previous writers, he is able to correct them on points of detail — e.g. C. Chenevix Trench who manages to confuse Ilminster and Ilchester (*The Western Rising*, 1969) and Bryan Little, who kills off two rebels who in fact were pardoned (*The Monmouth Episode*, 1956). He remarks mildly on the chapter on the Bloody Assizes in G. Keeton's *Lord Chancellor Jeffreys and the Stuart Cause* that it 'contains a number of quite shocking errors of fact'. It does — but the date of this egregious work is 1965 not 1972. Mr. Wigfield places more stress on religious dissent than on political radicalism or economic grievance as motive forces for the rebels. But though the book bears the sub-title 'a social history' its chief contribution lies not so much in analysis as in telling with warmth and humanity an unflinching moving tale.

University of Exeter

Ivan Roots

In contempt of all authority: rural artisans and riot in the West of England, 1586-1660, by Buchanan Sharp. London, University of California Press, 1980. £10.50. ISBN 0-520-03681-6.

I have only one complaint about this well-produced and innovative book: its 'West of England' does not take in the South-West. Cornwall is briefly mentioned in the text but is omitted from the index. Devon gets one entry and (apart from fleeting reference to the Prayer Book rising of 1549 and Monmouth's rebellion, both outside chronological boundaries) the nearest we get to the Axe and Exe is the Wilts-Dorset border. But the questions Dr Buchanan Sharp, who writes from Vera Cruz in the South-West of the USA asks, can be asked of Devon and his thought-provoking answers should surely be tested here, too.

In Contempt of All Authority is chiefly about the forest regions of Dean, Wiltshire and its fringe with Dorset, where between 1626 and 1632 there was an alarming series of anti-enclosure riots known collectively as 'the Western Rising'.

Elsewhere in the region and at other times between the accession of Elizabeth I and the Restoration there were food-riots and other sporadic outbreaks, which were in effect a continuation of petitioning by other means on the part of the propertyless lower orders. Dr Sharp seeks to identify and examine the temporal and geographical distribution, social status and (very interesting, this) the actual behaviour of the participants, together with the reactions of central and local government to what they did or were thought to be doing. Some of the results are surprising, all are set out with clarity, vigour and scrupulous scholarship. In particular our attention is directed to the existence and attitudes of landless rural artisans and cottagers, people who, contrary to the 'orthodox' picture of a rural society that was emphatically agrarian, were primarily, even exclusively, engaged in non-agricultural pursuits, as wage-earners or pieceworkers in e.g. cloth, mining, metal-lurgy, certainly in areas where substantial capitalists already controlled production and distribution. Such 'rural artisans' were not peasants. They were essentially dependent upon the market both for employment and food, and reacted violently, to the point of riot, even rising, to fluctuations there. Though the disorders often expressed hatred of the gentry and social superiors generally, Dr Sharp shews that they were essentially non-revolutionary and unideological in character, even during the civil war, when there was an effulgence of radical religious sects and political groupings. But the latter was only one, and perhaps the least typical, of the reactions of the meaner sort of people to the war's abrupt loosening of traditional social ties and controls. That provided 'a golden opportunity to settle old grievances', not to support from radical convictions the parliamentary cause — local parliamentary gentry were, in fact, generally 'horrified' at these potentially dangerous manifestations of real social conflict, expressed sometimes by women, who acted as loud mouthpieces for their men's grievances but also, since they were often the food purchasers for their families in the markets, of their own. A point of particular interest here is the government's persistent fear and suspicion that local disorders must be led or exploited by the gentry, but Dr Sharp can find no evidence that men of such substance 'provided leadership or connived at the riots from behind-the-scenes for their own purposes'. As he cogently remarks 'it is true that the best conspiracies are those that have left no trace behind, but the historian, like the law, needs evidence to prove a conspiracy' — or, indeed, to prove anything. The researcher's skill is to find it and having found it to press it hard to release its secrets.

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Ivan Roots

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ISSN 0305 8549