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The Devon Historian

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THE DEVON HISTORIAN

Correspondence relating to *The Devon Historian* and contributions for publication should be sent to Mrs Helen Harris, Hon. Editor, *The Devon Historian*, Hironelles, 22 Churchhill Road, Whitchurch, Tavistock PL19 9BU. The deadline for the next issue is 1 July 1988. Books for review should be sent to Mrs S. Stirling, c/o Devon & Exeter Institution, 7 The Close, Exeter.

DEVON HISTORY SOCIETY CONFERENCE

The Spring Conference will be held at Brixham on Saturday 12 March.

The print on the cover is *Brixham looking over Torbay, Devonshire*, steel engraving by W. Le Petit after T. Allom. Published Fisher, London, 1830/2. (S.C.no.247)

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DEVON HISTORY SOCIETY PUBLICATIONS

Current and back issues of *The Devon Historian* (except for numbers 7, 11, 15, 16, 22 and 23) can be obtained, price £1.50 post free, from Mrs S. Stirling, Devon & Exeter Institution, 7 The Close, Exeter. Also available post free are *Devon Newspapers* (£1.00), *Index to The Devon Historian* (for issues 1-15 50p and 16-30 £1), and *Devon Bibliography* (1980 50p, 1981 and 1982 60p each, 1983 and 1984 75p each).

The Vice-Chairman, Mr John Pike, 82 Hawkins Avenue, Chelston, Torquay, would be glad to acquire copies of the unobtainable numbers of *The Devon Historian* listed above.

NOTE FOR CONTRIBUTORS

Standards vary considerably in the way in which contributions are received for consideration—some are models of excellent presentation, others greatly complicate the work of the Honorary Editor and the printer. Please try to ensure that contributions are clearly typewritten, on one side of the paper only, with double spacing and adequate margins, and also, as far as possible, that the journal's style is followed on such matters as the restrained use of capital letters, initial single rather than double inverted commas, the writing of the date thus e.g.: 25 March 1988, etc. Thank you.

MORWELLHAM

The Friends of Morwellham—the 19th century port on the Devon bank of the River Tamar—are organising a weekend of visits based on the Bedford Hotel Tavistock on 16, 17, and 18 September 1988. Conducted visits will be arranged to the port of Morwellham, to the George and Charlotte Mine, to the site of Devon Great Consols copper Mine, to John Taylor's Tavistock Canal and to a small hydro-electric station.

Cost for dinner, bed and breakfast for two nights, entrance fees and all transport to and from sites: £88 (or £25 non-residential), per person. Early booking for accommodation is strongly recommended. Bookings, with £10 deposit, made payable to 'Friends of Morwellham', to Mr. R.R. Pymm, 31 Widey Lane, Crownhill, Plymouth, Devon, PL6 5JS, by 31 March, stating single or twin room requirements.

THE LANDING OF WILLIAM OF ORANGE AT BRIXHAM IN 1688: FACT AND FICTION

John Pike

The reasons why William, Prince of Orange chose to leave the security of his own land and cross to Britain are part of our national history and need no retelling here. It is sufficient to say that King James II had so antagonised his subjects that in July 1688 a group of English noblemen invited the Prince to come over and, as one contemporary historian expressed it, 'drive forever the pusillanimous traitor from the shores of England'.¹

Later in the year Louis XIV, William's enemy in Europe, turned his armies east and declared war on the German powers which freed the Prince to move west on what might be said was a very hazardous expedition in view of the misguided adventure of the Duke of Monmouth only three years earlier. A large expeditionary force of some fifty men-of-war and over two hundred transports was therefore assembled and the fleet sailed out of Helvetshuys on 19 September but a westerly gale drove it back again. Indeed the odds must have been against the Prince having a safe passage across the English Channel at a time when autumn gales often blew: another hazard he had to face was the English fleet under Sir George Legge, not fully mobilised, but still strong enough to break up the great convoy.²

The Dutch did not know whether to move north to Yorkshire or west down the Channel for their proposed landing and it was not until 2 November that William was persuaded by his officers to use the undefended land at Torbay. The fleet was helped by a strong easterly wind which quickly blew it through the Straits of Dover. Legge had been lying with his ships inside the Goodwins until the intentions of the enemy were clear: an assault on the Isle of Wight was certainly intended so at dawn on 4 November he sailed westward too. The Dutch were under the command of Admiral Arthur Herbert (later the Earl of Torrington), one of those who had gone to Holland to help plan the operation. Part of the force was intended to land at Dartmouth as well as at Brixham but the pilots were incompetent, they misread their bearings and by 5am were south of Start Point in a rising easterly gale with the English fleet in pursuit. Edward Russell, another English officer said to the clergyman Gilbert Burnett 'all is lost and you had better get to your prayers.'³ However as westcountry people know well a sudden change of wind to the south-west is always possible and as 'N N' quaintly expressed it 'the wind chopping about to the West-ward: upon which we stood fair by Dartmouth and so made for Torbay'⁴

His narrative continues: 'Upon his arrival at Torbay, the people on Land, in great numbers, Welcom'd his Highness with loud Acclamations of joy', Another Englishman, John Whittle gives a fuller account of the event⁵; 'The fleet put down their anchors on 4 November, which was the anniversary of William's birth and marriage, and it would have been more memorable if he could have landed that day. However the preparations could not be completed before nightfall so it was the following morning, after the fleet had been riding at anchor for a time, that 'Boats were ordered to carry the Prince on Shore, with his Guards; and passing towards the Land, with sundry Lords, the Admiral of Rotterdam gave divers Guns at his

Landing; the Boat was held length-ways until he was on shore: so after he had set his foot on Land, then came all the Lords and Guards, some going before his Sacred Person, and some coming after'.

From this point fact and fiction become interwoven. Neither Whittle nor N N mentions the following story told by Octavian Blewitt, which is rather surprising as both go to great lengths to explain how popular was the arrival of His Highness the Prince of Orange (never known as King William!). Blewitt, writing about 1830, says⁶: '... At last William approached the shore and demanded whether he was welcome, when after some further pause, he was asked what was his business, and his explanation was considered satisfactory... 'if I am then,' said the Prince 'come and carry me ashore' and immediately a little man, one of the party, plunged into the water and carried him triumphantly ashore to the steps of the pier. The inhabitants are said to have presented their illustrious visitor with the following address:

And please your Majesty King William,
You're welcome to Brixham Quay
To eat buckhorn and drink bohea
Along with we
and please your Majesty King William.

The story continues with the little man on a short ambling pony riding before him to Exeter, receiving a 'line under his hand which was to be his passport into the royal presence'. He was however intercepted by 'some sharpers, who made our poor Brixhamite gloriously drunk and kept him so for several weeks'. When he went to Court to claim his rights he was repulsed as an imposter. He was unable to hold his head up again in Brixham. There are so many discrepancies in this last story that it is unlikely to be anything more than a sermon on the 'demon drink' as it was told to Blewitt by Lyte himself.

Whether there is any truth in the whole story must be doubtful. Arthur Brixey⁷, another Torbay historian, first raised doubts at the end of the last century writing: 'Bohea was a rare China tea, introduced into England in the 1650s and was very expensive and scarce—60/- a pound and there was perhaps only a pound in the county and certainly none for the ordinary people! On the other hand *buckhorn* was dried fish of a rock-like texture, hardly the fare for a royal prince.' *And* should be *An't* meaning 'and it'; Brixham people would say 'along of us', not 'along of we'. It is therefore not surprising that the document has not survived and is as Brixey suggests an 'interesting legend'.

The story of how a 'fisherman named Varwell, waded out into the water and brought William III. to the landing place on his back' was also told frequently during the 19th and early 20th centuries.⁸ Even the time of day was calculated—it was between noon and one o'clock. A paper was presented to the Devonshire Association at their 1886 Meeting⁹ in which a descendent Peter Varwell explained in detail the part played by his ancestor. Some years earlier he had told a reporter: 'It has always been handed down to us, as a positive fact, that one of our ancestors did assist him to land, and gave the Prince his first night's lodgings in their humble abode in Middle Street, and accompany him to Newton on the following day... (We) are greatly pleased that our ancestors acted a noble part on that occasion.'¹⁰ The late Arthur Ellis in his unpublished history of Brixham writes: 'He stayed at the house of Christopher Farwell, Mayor of Totnes in 1656 (another member of the

family was MP for Dartmouth). This house was demolished in 1924 and stood nearly opposite the foot of Broad Steps in Middle Street'.¹¹

While the second story may have some credence, the Varwell/Farwell episode seems to have been passed down the years by word of mouth only and is certainly not borne out by a petition sent by Philip Bennet (not Bozn as recorded by Brixey), husband of Mary Bennet, late of Paignton '... she was the first that was honoured by His Majesty's presence after his landing at Brixham. The petitioner is desirous of spending the rest of his days in the King's service and craves some employment accordingly.'¹² A later letter in the State Papers reads: 'The Duke of Shrewsbury to the Lords of the Treasury. The King retains a gracious remembrance. It is his pleasure that you dispose of the petitioner in such employment in the Customs, or other branch of the revenue, as you shall judge him capable'. Ellis concludes: 'Bennet was probably occupying the Farwell house where William stayed'. He gives no reasons for this statement.

Ellis¹³ also introduces another name to the story; in March 1693 two warrants were sent to Emmanuel Lawrence in reward for services in 1688 and to reimburse him for losses when the French sacked Teignmouth in 1690. One of these was for £100 'in reward for his services at the King's landing and as in full satisfaction for his vessel sunk at Brixham Quay at the time of the French fleet being there, to prevent their landing there, and also for divers quantities of powder and other munitions furnished and advanced at the time for the King's service'.¹⁴ However a letter followed from Henry Guy which was sent to the Customs Commissioners concerning facts 'supplied by the parishioners of Brixham and other places in Torbay, touching several sums unjustly obtained by Emmanuel Lawrence'. An enquiry was ordered (the result is not known) into allegations that he had 'received £140 for a vessel sunk... half of which vessel had cost him but £15... (and) £22 for quartering part of his Majesty's Army when he landed in Torbay and £18 for the hire of pilots the same time, all which suggestions the information says is false'. This gentleman needs to be researched further.

Peter Varwell's paper was accompanied by a highly speculative sketch-map which purported to show the town of Brixham in 1688; this showed tidal water well up the valley and actually suggested there was a ferry operating between the two sides of the creek (from points near the present sites of the Bolton Hotel and Smugglers' Inn). Brixey¹⁵ could not accept this saying: 'There is a tradition that the harbour used at one time to run up the valley between Middle Street and Fore Street. Very likely it was so at one time... But a reference to the rocks on either hillside, in conjunction with the height of the land above high water, will enable a person to say with certainty where the sea *may* have reached, and where it could not possibly reach. At neap tides the water could not have reached far up the valley... William's army certainly landed on the quay; not in the valley, as some think.' On the wall in Brixham Museum today is the plan drawn up in 1781 for the Naval Reservoir presenting the situation only ninety years after the Prince's arrival. Brixey could not have seen it because he would have used it to support his argument. It shows that there was a long-established mill with a Pool (below Middle Street) and other buildings behind the 'Beach'—though there was still some low-lying and unbuilt meadow land on the site now occupied by the car-park.

This is in line with John Horsley's conjectured layout¹⁶ of Lower Brixham over 1500 years of its history. The plan confirms too the nature of the ground under the

Baptist Church which had to be made good with piling because of its soft and silty nature. It renders the story of the old Baptist deacon who in his youth fished on the site¹⁷ as improbable as the story of the ferry. Verbal stories unsupported by documentary evidence are unreliable in the extreme: William's landing took place at good landing points in Brixham and, according to another account¹⁸, at a place 'a quarter of a mile below the village where the ships could be brought very near to land against a good shore and the horses would not be put to swim above twenty yards'. This could refer to either Elbury or Broadsands.

One final piece of fiction remains to be disposed of. Spence, quoted by Blewitt¹⁹, mentions that when the people were apprehensive of the nature of his visit, the Prince addressed them thus in his broken English 'mine people, mine goot people, be not alarmed, I am only come for your good, for for all your goods'. There has been one instance of a more unhappy addition than in the case of the concluding S—even Blewitt was not prepared to add the response alleged to have been made 'And for our chattels too'.

The truth can only have come from the pen of the voluble Whittle: he was, as William Windeatt reminds us elsewhere, recording every incident day by day, being one of the 'prominent actors in that remarkable revolution'. It is he who relates the story of the Cary's priest who 'cast his Eyes towards the Sea, and espying the Fleet at a distance: withal being pur-blind in his Eyes, as well as blinded by Satan in his Mind, he presently concludes, that t'was the French Navy (because he saw divers white Flags) come to land the Sons of Belial, which should cut off the Children of God, or as they call us, the Hereticks: And being transported with Joy, he hastened to inform his own Disciples of the house, and forthwith they sung *Te Deum* . . . And because false Reports were spread abroad, that the People of the House had shot several of the Prince of Orange's Soldiers; and there upon they had burnt down the House: I must inform that candid Reader, that there was nothing at all in it, for our People did not give them one reviling word, not they us; some lodged there while we were at *Torbay*.'

N N tells it too but rather differently: 'The Prince the same day commanded Captain M to search the Lady C.'s House at Tor Abbey, for Arms and Horses; and all other Houses which were *Roman Catholic*s. The Lady entertained them civilly, said her Husband was gone to *Plymouth*: They brought from thence some Horses and a few Arms, but gave no further Disturbance to the Lady of her House.' The behaviour of the priest is also retold but adds that he 'concluded absolutely that we were the French Fleet; which with great impatience they had so long expected; and having laid up great provisions for their Entertainment: the Priest ordered all to the Chappel to sing *Te Deum*, for the arrival of their supposed Forces; but being soon deceived, on our landing we found benefit of their Provisions: and instead of *Votre-Servitude Monsieur*, they were entertained with *Teen Mijnheere*, Can you Dutch Spraken; upon which they were all run away from the House, but the Lady and a few old Servants'.

Whittle gives some account of events in Brixham after William had landed: 'As soon as the Prince had viewed well the Ground upon the top of the hill, and found the most commodious place for his Army to encamp, he then gave Orders for every thing, and so returned down the Hill unto the Fishermens little Houses: one of which he made his Palace for that time . . . All the Lords were quartered up and down and these Fishermens Houses, whereof these poor Men were glad'. He then describes the

deployment of the various units including the Foot Guards 'within an inclosure of plowed land, about which there was a natural Fence, good Hedges and little Stone Walls so that no horse could touch them'. Early Victorian photographs show dry-stone walls covering the hillside on Rea Hill; the landscape had probably changed little in two centuries.

There are some lighter incidents: 'There was a little Alehouse amongst the Fishermens Houses which was so extremely throng'd and crowded, that a Man could not thrust in his Head, nor get Bread or Ale for Mony. It was a happy time for the Landlord, who strutted about as if indeed he had been a Lord himself, because he was honoured with Lords Company'. William himself sent a letter to Admiral Herbert headed *Le Camp de Torbay, November 6th 1688*, which confirms the uneventful landing at Brixham and his plans for disembarking his regiments near Exeter—there is little of interest here, except that he was still anxious to protect his fleet 'from the English, should it come along'.²⁰

Many people from the neighbourhood came to gaze in wonder at the new arrivals who remained until about noon on the Wednesday when the order was given to march on Exeter but there were problems: 'As we marched here upon good Ground, the Soldiers would stumble and sometimes fall, because of a dissiness in their Heads after they had been so long toss's at Sea, the very Ground seem'd to rowl up and down for some days, according to the manner of the Waves'.

In a farmhouse at Longcombe to the south west of Paignton, still called Parliament House (this is confirmed by the current edition of the Ordnance Survey), William is said to have held a meeting with his English supporters before moving on to Berry Pomeroy where he was welcomed by Sir Edward Seymour.²¹ It is here that fiction appears again. W C Couldrey, a well-known architect in Paignton, in a paper to the Devonshire Association²² explained: 'A number of local landowners and men of importance met him as Longcombe, about a mile from the Paignton boundary when they agreed to support his cause. The house still exists and is known as 'Parliament House'. There is on the building a stone slab with an inscription recording the fact. He then came to Paignton, and slept at an old posting-house called the 'Crown and Anchor Inn'. It was a very commodious inn, with an assembly room and stabling for a large number of horses. Couldrey was only repeating what had been recorded earlier. William Windeatt, very much earlier in 1875, told the Association.²³ 'Having become a popular seaside resort the inevitable guidebook (of Brixham) appeared which contained the sentence 'after leaving Brixham his Highness dined in Higher Yalberton, about 2 miles from Paignton, and the room is still shown with a piece of ornament in the ceiling over the place where he sat. Nowhere can I find any evidence which bear out the statement'. Windeatt concluded: 'How easily tradition can be handed down, requiring only three or four individuals, for two centuries(!)'

An overnight stay somewhere at Paignton is however confirmed in an unsigned document in the Earl of Denbigh's collection, *Relation du Voyage d'Angleterre*²⁴ which states: 'On the 15th (o.s) we marched to Paignton, a village situated on the other side of the Bay, where our troops encamped. On the morrow we proceeded to Newton Bushel, where we were joined by the cavalry, which had taken one day more to disembark'.

William went on to Ford House at Newton Abbot where he stayed for a short time. The bed he slept in still survives.²⁵ Whittle's narrative of what presumably is the

Longcombe event: 'So he went to a certain Gentleman's House about two little Miles off, where the last Line encamped the second Night, and lodged there, his own Guards being with him. . . .' He seems more concerned with travelling conditions as 'the Lanes hereabout were very narrow, and not used to Wagons, Carts, or Coaches, and therefore extream rough and stony, which hindered us much from making any speed: Divers of the Dutch-men being unaccustomed to such bad ways and hard marching in the Dirt, wish'd themselves back again in their own Country, and murmured because of the Dark and Rain. . . .' It might have been the present day: 'It was a red Clay, and it rain'd very hard the greatest part of the Night the Winds being high and stormy'.

William's march across South Devon ended at Newton Abbot on 7 November. It was market day and his declaration was read to the crowds assembled in front of St Leonard's Chapel in Wolborough Street. A stone still there has the inscription:

The first declaration of William III, Prince of Orange, the glorious defender of the Protestant religion and the liberties of England was read on this pedestal by the Rev. John Reynell, rector of the parish, 5th November 1688.

It was not the fifth and it was not read by the Rev. Reynell;²⁶ Macaulay says it was the King's Chaplain—Whittle affirms it as 'a certain Divine (who) went before the Army'.

As the tercentenary approaches two memorials stand in Brixham to commemorate the landing. The stone on which the Prince first set foot was kept and built into a small granite column. For many years it 'disappeared from sight', to re-appear on the quay in 1849. This too bears an inscription: 'On this stone, and near this spot, William Prince of Orange, first set foot in England, 5th November 1688.'²⁷ The famous statue of him is on the other side of the harbour; this was erected in 1889 at a cost of £700, one year after the bicentenary celebrations. A Victorian historian of Brixham reminded his readers that the pedestal bears the memorable words 'The Protestant Religion and the liberties of England I will maintain'²⁸. In the context of Northern Ireland today this has a hollow ring.

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New Contributors

M.C. Lowe is a retired teacher who has for some years been studying the history of Totnes from about 1750. He is now researching the history of various South Devon turnpike trusts.

Alan Endacott is Curator of Okehampton and District Museum of Dartmoor Life. John Havill is a retired civil servant living in Exeter, who has written papers on Thomas Bodley, founder of the Bodleian Library (1980); Nicholas Stone, the statuary, mason and architect (1982) and Eleanor Coade, the artificial stone manufacturer (1986).

FRENCH PRISONERS OF WAR ON PAROLE IN TIVERTON 1797-1812

Adrian Reed

In August 1797 the Admiralty Transport Board informed the Mayor of Tiverton that they had decided to move the prisoners then at Ashburton further inland and that his town seemed suitable for their reception. Similar precautions against a possible French invasion were taken in 1803 when all Tiverton's prisoners were moved into Staffordshire and Derbyshire. Finally, in 1812, the officers then held were sent to Wales or Scotland, and Tiverton ceased to be a parole town.

The Board's letter to the Mayor asked for a suitable man to be proposed as its Agent and in agreement with Beavis Wood, the Town Clerk, the name of William Tucker, a mercer, was submitted. In asking Dudley Ryder M.P. to support the nomination Wood added that Tucker, apart from being well disposed, had leisure and needed the job. This was probably true of most merchants in Tiverton. The cloth trade had been in a bad way since the French occupation of Holland had closed its last overseas market in 1795, leading to a petition for peace being sent to London that year. As Wood had observed in another connection 'the Rich do not inhabit this Neighbourhood'. He thought the £150 a week the French might bring would well outweigh the dangers of Jacobinism and scarcity of provisions alleged by the unsuccessful candidate, one Owens.

Tucker proved to be a good choice and was re-appointed by the Board when the war resumed in 1803. He was commended for his zeal in intercepting illicit correspondence and his accounts were always sent promptly and correctly. It is therefore surprising that for no discoverable reason he was replaced in the summer of 1805 by Thomas Enchmarsh who seems to have been Tucker's opposite in every respect. The Enchmarshes were a colourful family. Earlier members had disguised themselves as woolcombers to spy out and bring to Tiverton the secrets of Norwich stuffs, had held the mayoralty, been in and out of prison for debt, and even died from eating a salad in which hemlock had taken the place of parsley. Thomas shared their financial weaknesses and throughout his Agency money stuck to his fingers. The ringer of the curfew bell got only half his entitlement and it needed much pressure from the Board before he handed over £50 sent for one of his prisoners. The state of his accounts and his delays in forwarding them earned him several rebukes. Nevertheless, in 1806, when the number of prisoners had fallen sharply the Board decided that his 5 per cent commission on prisoners' allowances should be made up to give him £40 a year. Their generosity was not reciprocated. Enchmarsh was lax with the prisoners, even employing one to write his official letters until the Board detected the 'foreign Hand'. He was involved in a dubious trading transaction with one of his charges, who when threatened him. The Board sent the Frenchman to a prison ship and censured Enchmarsh for dealing in what they believed to have been contraband goods. In spite of all his shortcomings he held his job to the end although for the last few months he was allowed, because of ill-health, to let Beavis Wood and William Skinner act on his behalf. Characteristically, almost the last letter he had from the Board was one instructing him to explain why he had not repaid a long

standing debt to the agent at Okehampton. It seems probable that it was only the Ryder influence that kept him in his job.

The Board's attitude to its prisoners on parole was reasonably accommodating to their requests and generally benevolent, provided they observed their parole undertakings. These were the restrictions placed on their movement and correspondence and the obligation to behave decently and to obey British law. Escapes were not infrequent and the Board's invariable reaction to recaptured prisoners was that they 'should be confined on board a prison ship as Persons devoid of Honour'. The French officers mostly took a less serious view of their undertakings and it is likely that townspeople sometimes helped them to get away. In December 1810 a solicitor was instructed to examine persons suspected of having assisted in recent escapes and there are references to other, similar enquiries. Escapes were of three kinds: those in which the prisoner made his own way to the coast trusting to hire or steal a boat there; where he put himself in the hands of smugglers; or where he employed a professional escape agent. Broadly, about half those trying to escape were successful, the average being higher for the country as a whole. In the first part of the war prisoners were held for only a year or two before being sent home. After 1803 a longer stay was the rule. In 1804-1811 the average time spent in Tiverton was 3-4 years after which the prisoner was usually moved to another town. The main problem was the French attitude to exchanges which, they argued, would always be to Britain's advantage since they would be getting back scarce professionals: France with all Europe to draw on could afford to leave their prisoners in British hands. The Board reacted from time to time by stopping sending Frenchmen home. In November 1810 Enchmarsh was instructed to tell eighteen prisoners who had petitioned for release that this could not take place until 'the French Government make some return for the very great number of French prisoners already sent from this country'. After such announcements the number of attempted escapes tended to increase and with so lax an agent as Enchmarsh a few days could elapse before they were reported.

The Board was equally strict in maintaining curfew hours. Enchmarsh's plea that 'certain prisoners being musicians had occasionally by leave of the mayor assisted at Concerts and remained out of their lodgings until 10 o'clock' earned the rebuke that neither the Mayor nor any other magistrate had authority to allow prisoners out after parole hours. Indeed, three who had been permitted to be so by a Tiverton magistrate had each to pay the regulation one guinea fine.

Prisoners' clandestine correspondence was another of the Board's preoccupations. Local people were known to connive but evidence was hard to get and the Board could be reduced to forbidding prisoners to lodge in a suspect's house. Seditious or Jacobinical correspondence seems to have been the main aim in the early years of the war. After 1803 it was the discovery of escape plans. In 1804 Tucker seized letters from France containing blank printed certificates of nationality purporting to have been issued by the Danish Vice-Consul at Plymouth, while in 1810 it was discovered that prisoners at North Tawton were printing passports differing from the genuine only in the spelling of the word 'prisoner'.

Throughout the period the Board gives the impression of a group of gentlemen dealing with those they assumed to be gentlemen and reacting painedly when they found they were not. With parole breakers they had 'to act with a rigour, very unpleasant to them, in order to put a stop to such disgraceful conduct' while the

flamboyant Creole General Boyer had to be told that they would accept no further letter from him 'unless it be written in language more decent and more becoming his situation as a prisoner than his letters have hitherto been'. On the other hand they responded to humanitarian pleas whenever they could. In January 1806 they quickly accepted Lord Carysfort's request to send Lefort, the surgeon of the *Formidable*, from Tiverton to France on parole because of the humane treatment he had given to his son Lord Proby who died a prisoner at Brest. They were also active in ensuring that prisoners got the protection of the laws they had undertaken to observe.

In 1811 a soldier and a woman were arraigned at Exeter Assizes for assaulting M. Lacombe, and accounts of successful prosecutions in other parts of the country were sent to the agent for the information of his prisoners.

The Board's chivalrous side is noticeable in its treatment of Rear Admiral Dumanoir le Pelly, the most distinguished officer sent to Tiverton. He commanded the French van at Trafalgar but his ships did not come into action and were taken a fortnight later off Finisterre by Sir Richard Strachan. The Government allowed him to defend his conduct in the *Times* and were anxious that he should not be handicapped at any enquiry in France by the absence of witnesses for his defence. The Board even went to the length of instructing Enchmarsh to tell him that if he wanted to defer his return they would so arrange it that they appeared responsible for the delay.

The number of prisoners held in Tiverton was small in relation to the size of the town. With a population of about 6,500 in 1801 there were never more than 300 there at any one time which gave it about the lowest prisoner: citizen ratio of any Devon parole town. The flow of prisoners was uneven. The first batch of 176 which came in October 1797 had moved on to Stapleton near Bristol by the end of November. Then there was a gap until November 1798 when over a hundred arrived, mainly officers from Hoche's abortive descent on Ireland. These left in January 1799, mostly on parole to France. No more prisoners were sent to Tiverton until the second phase of the war. Between June 1803 and June 1811 667 officers (and servants) were on parole in the town. The first arrivals, 277, were quickly sent on to the Midlands and thereafter the numbers arriving were not great: 68 in 1804, 46 in 1805, 32 in 1806, 7 in 1807, 160 in 1808, 13 in 1809, 38 in 1810 and 60 in 1811. Onward movements were frequent. Of the 160 who came in 1808, for example, few stayed longer than a year.

Down to 1808 the prisoners were mainly people taken at sea or in minor land campaigns; sailors and a few army officers. After 1808 the latter predominated, many, coming from Dupont's army which had surrendered to the Spaniards at Baylen, were sent to England because they could not be looked after in Spain. By no means all were officers. Of the first 176 in 1797 at least 39 were servants and 12 civilians: only 30 would count to-day as commissioned officers. Beavis Wood commented to Dudley Ryder that there was only one 'Gentleman of Family' among them and he urged that he should be released to France on parole. After 1803 the rules were lightened to exclude warrant officers but servants were still allowed, if taken with their officers. The prisoners sent to Tiverton on the resumption of the war in 1803 were from upwards of 64 merchantmen and seven warships and four privateers, with the former making up the major part of the total of 277. They had all gone by the end of the year.

There is little evidence as to the part played by the prisoners in the life of Tiverton

or what the townspeople thought of them. The first arrivals earned the public thanks of the Corporation for putting out one of Tiverton's periodic fires, for which action they refused to accept any reward. When they left a month later Beavis Wood reported that the townspeople came in tears to see them off: 'the Thing was uncommon and a Specimen of the Gentle Part of War.' Their successors the following year were not so popular the 'officers in general appear to be a sad fierce looking lot' and they were seen to go without regret. The only direct evidence from the French side available is that of the lieutenant who was in Tiverton after Trafalgar. He found it a pleasant if monotonous little town with the population generally well disposed. He took lessons in literature and history from his comrades in return for fencing instruction. It seems probable that the prisoners, for most of the time a small community, found social relaxation in each others' company, rather than in that of the townspeople. Only one marriage is traceable between a prisoner and a Tiverton girl, at St. Peter's in 1809. The warning that such marriages would not be recognised in France may have deterred others. Fathers and brothers also watched the Frenchmen. The request in 1811 of a Mr Avery for the removal of a certain officer 'to prevent unpleasant consequences which he apprehends will result from an Intimacy between his sister and M . . . ' was approved by the Board provided that the applicant met the cost of the prisoner's journey to Chatham, en route to Scotland. Trouble, though, seems mostly to have been amongst the prisoners themselves and not with the townspeople. There was a major riot in 1805 in which a civilian, M. Pepin, was injured. The cause is unknown but after investigations by the magistrates the Board's initial decision to send the principals to prison was rescinded and they were merely cautioned.

More seriously regarded by the Board was the Freemasons' Lodge, "Des Enfants de Mars" (sic). Enchmarsh claimed that he only went to see that 'no improper practise prevailed' but the Board had information from other sources suggesting different motives and that he was an actual member of the lodge. He had also forwarded letters from the lodge to that in the Mill Prison at Plymouth. He was severely censured and told to choose between the lodge and his agency. A few months later he had to inform the lodge members that if they met again they would all be sent from Tiverton. As lodges were tolerated in some other parole towns there may have been a special reason for closing that in Tiverton.

It is probable that most of the prisoners lodged with householders. Tucker in 1797 had no difficulty in accommodating the first arrivals but there is no record of the houses in which the French lived then or later. Nor is there evidence that as in Wincanton the poorer ate in their own clubs where only cheap vegetable dishes were served. Probably most of those in Tiverton after 1804 got by on their allowances and on the remittances which passed through Mr Enchmarsh's hands. In fact there is little more known about their lives now than there was ninety years ago when writers commented on the absence of information or even traditional legend about these officers in the inland Devonshire market towns in which so many of them had lived. It is possible that in Tiverton they preferred their own society to that of the local merchants and attorneys and like most expatriate communities were inward looking. They seem to have avoided trouble and so attention. Some no doubt were men of culture but there is no reason to suppose that as a whole they brought more than the novelty of strange speech and manners to the town.

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ADM 98-189/205. Board's Outward Letter Books 1796-1812.

ADM 99-92/279. Board's Minutes with summaries of inward letters.

The former are incomplete and the latter perfunctory which is unfortunate as the Agents' own letters to the Board have not been preserved.

AXMINSTER MYTHOLOGY

G.M. Chapman

This history of most old towns is embellished by a mythology made up of legends and traditions, usually picturesque and almost always dear to the hearts of the townfolk. Often these contain an element of truth the search for which can be surprisingly rewarding. Axminster has four such traditions; that the church was founded by a Saxon prince named Cynehard; that the church was converted to a minster by King Athelstan after the battle of Brunanburgh in 937; that the battle itself was fought near Axminster; and that a castle was built at Axminster in 916 on the instructions of Alfred the Great's eldest daughter, Ethelfleda. In addition there is the assertion, more error than myth, sometimes found in older histories, that Alfred left the royal estate of Axminster to his youngest son in his will.

The tradition that the church at Axminster was founded by the Saxon prince Cynehard, known as the Atheling, arose from a violent episode in the history of Wessex that occurred about the middle of the 8th century. Cynehard was a brother of the ex-king of Wessex, Siegebert, who had been deposed and replaced by Cynewulf 'because of his evil deeds.' Cynewulf seems to have regarded Cynehard with suspicion and contemplated banishing him, possibly because of the relationship between him and Siegebert. When word of this reached Cynehard he decided to strike first. Discovering that Cynewulf was paying a clandestine visit, accompanied by only a few of his followers, to his mistress at a place called Merantun, not yet positively identified, he pursued him there with a band of his own followers. In the affray that followed Cynewulf was slain, along with all but one of his men. Retribution quickly ensued. A body of Cynewulf's own followers, led by Osric, the king's alderman, arrived the next day, attacked and slew Cynehard and with oddly poetic justice, all his men but one. The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle places this fracas in 755 or 757 but some authorities think that it occurred later, in 786.¹

The tradition that the church at Axminster was founded by Cynehard arose from the sequel to the fighting at Merantun. The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle records, in what is the first known written reference to Axminster, that, while the murdered king's body was taken to Winchester, the capital of Wessex, for burial, Cynehard's was taken to Axminster.² No reason is given for this and it came to be believed that it was because Cynehard had founded the church. Possibly he, or some member of his family, had been a benefactor of the church; or it might have been thought fitting that, as a prince of the royal house, he should be buried in a place of importance, despite his crime of regicide. Axminster was the head town of a large hundred and the centre of a royal estate. Domesbook records that it received annual tribute from Honiton, Smallridge, Membury, Rawridge and Charleton (possibly a place, now lost, in Upton parish). There must have been a church at Axminster before 755, possibly already having minster status.

The second of Axminster's traditions is that the minster was founded by King Athelstan in 937 after winning his great victory in the battle of Brunanburgh. Its origin lies in a cartulary of Newenham Abbey which was founded in 1246 by Sir Reginald de Mohun and his brother, Sir William, and endowed by Sir Reginald with

the manor of Axminster. After his victory, over a confederation of Danes, Scots and Cumbrian Britons, Athelstan ordered, according to the cartulary, that the bodies of seven thanes, killed in the battle, should be buried in the church at Axminster. At the same time he appointed seven priests there who were to pray daily for the souls of the thanes and others killed in the fighting, so, in the words of James Davidson, 'forming the church into a collegiate establishment.'³ To provide for the material needs of the priests the king endowed the church with half a hide of land within the royal estate of Axminster. This became the little manor of Priestaller. Its approximate location is marked by Priestaller Farm, just to the east of the town.

The legend of Brunanburgh and the founding of the minster became deeply embedded in the history, not only of Axminster but of Devon. However, documentary proof that the date 937, for the latter event, is incorrect is provided by a charter of King Edward the Elder, Athelstan's father, recording a grant of property at Fovant. The charter was issued at a Witan held 'in loco celebri qui dicitur Axemunster' (sic), in 901.⁴ The town was thus known by its historic name 36 years before the battle of Brunanburgh. It seems likely that it was so called for much longer. The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle refers to it as Axminster in the account of Cynehard's burial there in 755. Though the various versions of the Chronicle were written at dates not earlier than the 9th century they are known to have been based on earlier records, now lost.⁵ The term 'celebri', attached to it in Edward the Elder's charter, also suggests some venerability.

There is no known documentary evidence of the date of the foundation of the minster. Circumstantial evidence points to a date sometime between 680 and 720. Professor Hoskins states that Axminster was 'one of the earliest settlements in the Saxon occupation of Devon, founded in all probability soon after 660.'⁶ It would therefore be a likely place for the establishment of a minster. Dr. Orme writes 'The oldest churches we hear of in Devon were not parish churches but religious houses; monasteries of monks, or minsters served by canons. These occur in Exeter as early as the 680s, and later on at Axminster, Crediton, Cullompton, Hartland, Tavistock and other places.'⁷ Another authority, C.A. Raleigh Radford, states 'the main framework of early English church organisation seems to have been the work of Archbishop Theodore of Tarsus who held the metropolitan see of Canterbury between 669 and 690. Many of the minsters, which figure so largely in the history of the pre-Conquest church in England, go back to his day.'⁸ He points out that the minster at Exeter was already in existence in the last quarter of the 7th century and that the minster at Crediton was founded in 739. Somewhat earlier J.J. Alexander drew attention to the importance of the Synod of Hertford in 673 at which Archbishop Theodore and the heads of the Saxon church formulated plans for the extension of ecclesiastical organisation into territories recently conquered and settled by the Saxons. This was to be done by the setting up of mission centres from which priests were to go out into the surrounding countryside, the paruchia, preaching to the people and caring for their spiritual welfare. The majority of towns, whose names contain the element 'minster', south of the Thames, lie, he points out, within or close to Bishop Aldhelm's see of Sherborne, established in 705. He suggests that it is almost certain that these minsters were established by Aldhelm or his immediate successor, Forthere; adding that Axminster and Exminster were probably established early in the 8th century.⁹ Professor Hoskins has little doubt that this is true of Axminster. He follows his previously quoted remark by stating

'Axminster or *monasterium* was founded here, probably soon after 705 when the see of Sherborne was created to bring Devon within the Saxon episcopal organisation.'¹⁰

The minster at Exminster may have been established about the same time as that at Axminster. W.H. Wilkin relates that C.C. Carter pointed out to him that these two minsters were both in royal estates and endowed with half a hide of land. Both, he believed, had been founded by a king in council.¹¹ Mr. Raleigh Radford also remarks on the significance of the fact that Axminster and Exminster were royal manors and the centres of hundreds and that the churches at both places held half a hide of land. He adds the further example of Braunton, 'Brannocminster in a 9th century charter', where, 'it is recorded in the Exeter Domesday that Alger the priest held a hide of the king's manor, in alms, of the king.'¹² Dr Pearce mentions two 7th century Saxon kings, Cenwalh, (641-672) and Centwine, (675-685), who were benefactors of the church in west Wessex, it may be not without significance that Bishop Aldhelm was Centwine's son. 'Perhaps,' Dr. Pearce suggests, 'minster foundations in Dorset and east Devon should be placed in his reign.'¹³

The views of the various authorities quoted above suggest the possibility that the church at Axminster may have actually begun as a minster foundation. Dr. Orme states 'In due course, one or two of the old religious houses, like Axminster and Cullompton, ceased to be minsters and turned into ordinary churches.'¹⁴ The monks of Newenham could have had little knowledge of the history of the early Saxon church. Seeking for an illustrious figure as founder of the minster, they turned to the legendary hero-king, Athelstan, who was famed for the munificence of his gifts to the church. One of these was the foundation of a chapel and minster church, which later became a Benedictine abbey, at Milton, in Dorset, in thanksgiving for his victory at Brunanburgh. The monks of Newenham must have known of this and of his endowment of the church with the manor of Stockland, not far from Axminster. It may have influenced their choice. The similarity between the two foundations is noteworthy.

The legend of the founding of the minster is bound up with the belief that the battle of Brunanburgh, the necessary prelude to it, was fought near Axminster. This has become a cherished local tradition. The main thoroughfare of a modern housing estate is named Brunanburgh Way and there was, until recently, a Brunanburgh antique shop in the town. In the account of the battle in the Newenham Abbey cartulary however, it is significant that it is nowhere referred to by name. Dr. Oliver wrote: 'The register of Newenham Abbey informs us that the battle began "*apud Kalestynes doune*" or "*almunt Seynt Kelyxt en Devensyr*" and continued to be fought as far as Colecroft under Axminster.'¹⁵ Both he and Pulman identified Colecroft as Colemede, near Bow Bridge, just west of the town. In his description of Colyton Dr. Oliver refers to a chapel there, dedicated to St. Kalixtus and asks 'Can this have been Kalestynesdoune or "*almunt Seynt Kalyst*?"' He then quotes from the charter granted to the feoffees of Colyton in 1546 by Henry VIII in which mention is made of 'our chapel called Calesdoun Chapel.'¹⁶ These references to local places in the account of the battle in the Newenham cartulary meant much to Pulman and others who sought to establish that the Axe valley was the scene of the conflict but, as more than one authority has suggested, they could have been associated with some other fight between the Saxons and the Danes that was later assumed to be Brunanburgh.

Probably the most influential of the older writers on the subject of the battle was Leland. It is perhaps significant that, like the Newenham cartulary, he does not call it Brunanburgh. In his Itinerary he wrote: 'The chirch of Axmistre is famos by the Sepultures of many Noble Danes slain in King Athelstane's Time at a batel on Brunedoun therby, and by the Sepultures likewise (of) sum Saxon Lordes slain in the same Feld.'¹⁷ Pulman quotes this passage and also that from Leland's Collectanea.¹⁸ This was based mainly on a reference to what Pulman describes as 'an ancient Norman-French Chronicle' in which figures of the casualties in the battle were given.¹⁹ This chronicle may be the origin of an annotation on a map 'almost certainly created in 1539-40 in connection with Henry VIII and Thomas Cromwell's plans, as set out in repeated "Devyyses", drafted by Cromwell, to fortify the coast against an expected Franco-Spanish invasion.' The map shows the south-west coast from Seaton to Land's End and the north coast of Cornwall. The annotation, which is placed on the map opposite to the east Devon coast, states: 'The entry of otterford & seton ryvers good londing & in the tyme of King aelthelston there entred at seton diverse strange nations who were slayne at Axmyster to the number of v kynoges VIII Erlis a hisshoppe & IX score thousand in the hole as a boke old writen doth testyfy.'²⁰ Pulman cites the annotation, stating that it is 'very much to my purpose.' He emphasises the words 'a boke old writen' by putting them in italics and suggests that the 'boke' was the French chronicle referred to above. This seems possible as the casualty figures are the same in both. Unfortunately Pulman give no indication of the origin or whereabouts of the chronicle.²¹

There can be little doubt that Pulman got most, if not all, of the evidence he assembles to support the contention that the battle of Brunanburgh was fought near Axminster, from James Davidson, the eminent 19th century Axminster historian and antiquary, with whom he was on friendly terms. He was, Pulman wrote, 'satisfied that our valley was the scene of the terrible conflict' and has recorded in his manuscript history that his conviction was gained after a careful investigation and comparison of the statements made by all the ancient chroniclers and writers to whose works he could gain access, and that these were *more than seventy in number*.²² (Pulman's italics.) Pulman was a larger than life character who urged with immense gusto the case for any cause that enjoyed his support. His spirited account of the battle in *The Hook of the Axe* and his confident assertion that it took place near Axminster, together with his great and well-merited reputation as a historian, are the principal reasons why it became so widely accepted that Athelstan's mighty victory was gained near to Axminster.

However, not all west country historians shared the certainty of Pulman and Davidson on the matter. The Lyme Regis historian, George Roberts, wrote: 'The battle of Brunanburgh and its locality, a doubtful point of history, requires a long and patient investigation to free it from the load of uncertainty under which it lies buried. The Newenham register, unhappily, does not describe the engagement as that of Brunanburgh.'²³ This perceptive comment was made in 1834. Sixty years later R.N. Worth expressed similar doubts. He wrote: 'we must dismiss as unhistoric' the tradition of the founding of the minster by Athelstan after Brunanburgh, which, he says, 'was certainly not fought in the west.' He suggests the tradition, 'which is of very great antiquity', refers to actual fighting and that 'there appears to have been grafted upon the original legend some memories of Brunanburgh with which, indeed, the fight has been mistakenly identified.'²⁴

Several places, including the shores of the Solway Firth and Burnley, have been suggested as possible sites for the battle. The latest suggestion, the banks of the river Don, near Doncaster, has been discussed recently, on both television and in print, by Michael Wood.²⁵ Circumstantial evidence in favour of a north country site for the battle has always been strong and, if it is accepted, as some historians believe, that the invaders' fleet came in to the Humber, then the site of the battle may, in Michael Wood's words, have been 'among the frontier forts on the southern border of the Northumbrians along the Don valley in Yorkshire.' An interesting little passage in Mrs. Anderson's book, *Looking for History in British Churches*, lends some support to this suggestion. She describes a window in York Minster which illustrates the life of St. John of Beverley. It includes a panel showing a king kneeling before an altar on which lies a sword. This refers, Mrs. Anderson writes, to the incident when Athelstan laid his sword upon the saint's shrine before the battle of Brunanburgh, promising to redeem it should he be victorious.²⁶

There is no doubt that, in mediaeval times and perhaps for longer, a building in Axminster known as the Castle stood on Castle Hill, in the centre of the town. It is referred to several times in mediaeval deeds and grants of property relating to adjacent buildings. One of these is mentioned by Davidson, a deed dated about 1300, that he had found in a cartulary of Newenham Abbey. It concerns a house 'newly built upon the castle' for Peter de Childehaye, the miller.²⁷ Unfortunately no evidence exists to show what sort of a building it was. Pulman assumed that it was a castle of traditional type, with 'enormous walls' and 'the strong and lofty tower known as the keep.' He gives the date of its construction as 916 and attributes the selection of Axminster as one of the places where castles were to be sited to Princess Ethelfleda, the eldest daughter of Alfred the Great. Unfortunately he give no source for this information.²⁸ Davidson is notably guarded on the matter, merely referring to Risdon's statement, that 'the place where (the market) is kept is called the Castle.'²⁹ The old market was at the top of Castle Hill. The building to which Risdon refers may have been of an administrative nature where the business of the manor and hundred and of the market was transacted.

The statement that Axminster was bequeathed by Alfred the Great to his youngest son is occasionally made by 19th century writers. This is not a myth but an error due to confusion between Axminster and Exminster. It was the latter that Alfred bequeathed to his son.

Myths and errors are not the same. Of myths Dr. Pearce writes: 'It is especially difficult to distinguish between contemporary fact and later fiction.'³⁰ It is a wise caution. Behind the picturesque but shadowy pageant that flickers to and fro across Axminster's early history one senses the reality of a Saxon town of such standing as to be described in a royal charter as 'celebri' It was certainly important enough to be one of only four towns in Devon at which the Witan met in the 10th century.³¹ It is possible, as suggested above, that it ranked sufficiently high in the estimation of the Saxons for a minster to be founded there early in the 8th century. Axminster's mythology may be a testimony to an eventful period in its pre-Conquest history of which only two or three fragmentary solid records survive.

Notes

- 1 *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, Trans. G.N. Garmonsway. Everymans Library J.M. Dent. 1977 edition.
- 2 Garmonsway. op.cit.
- 3 Davidson, James, *History of Axminster Church*, 1853. Reprinted Snell. Axminster. 1895.
- 4 Davidson. op.cit., mentions a reference to Axminster church in the *Registrum Wiltenense Saxonicum et Latinum*. R.C. Hoare. London. 1827. Mrs. P. Basing, curator of the Department of Manuscripts at the British Library, kindly verified this reference for me. It comes from Harley MS., 436 ff. 42b-45. The manuscript, which belonged to Wilton Abbey, is an early 13th century register of charters of the Anglo-Saxon period. It was edited by Hoare in 1827. The item referring to Edward the Elder's grant is on pp.24-25.
- 5 Garmonsway. op.cit.
- 6 Hoskins, W.G., *Devon*. Collins. London. 1954.
- 7 Orme, Nicholas. 'The Mediaeval Parishes of Devon' *Devon Historian*. 33. October 1986.
- 8 Raleigh Radford, C.A., 'The pre-Conquest Church and the Old Minsters in Devon'. *The Devon Historian*. 11. October 1975.
- 9 Alexander, J.J., 'Tenth Report on the Early History of East Devon'. *Transactions of the Devonshire Association*. LXXI. 1939.
- 10 Hoskins. op.cit.
- 11 Wilkin, W.H., Notes on Axminster Church. A paper read to the Exeter Diocesan Architectural and Archaeological Society on 3 September 1934. Bound with off-prints of his articles in the *Transactions of the Devonshire Association*. Axminster Reference Library.
- 12 Raleigh Radford. op.cit.
- 13 Pearce, Susan, *The Kingdom of Dumnonia*. Lodenek Press. Padstow. 1987.
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- 15 Oliver, G. *Ecclesiastical Antiquities of Devon*. Vol. 1.
- 16 Oliver. op.cit. Vol 11.
- 17 Pearce Chope, R., *Early Tours in Devon and Cornwall*. David and Charles. Newton Abbot. 1967. The Itinerary of John Leland the Antiquary. pps.81-2.
- 18 Pulman, G.P.R., *The Book of the Axe*. Bath Reprints. 1969. p. 599.
- 19 Pulman. op.cit. p.597.
- 20 This reference was verified for me by the British Library. It is from Cotton Augustus I.i. 25,36,38,39. The purpose of the map or view was to identify stretches of the coast that were most vulnerable to invasion and to show proposed sites for defensive forts.
- 21 Pulman op.cit. pp.599-600.
- 22 Pulman op.cit. pp.596-7.
- 23 Roberts, George, *History of Lyme Regis*. 1834.
- 24 Worth, R.N., *A History of Devonshire*. London. 1895. pp.60-61.
- 25 Wood, Michael, *In Search of the Dark Ages*. Ariel Books. British Broadcasting Corporation. 1981. pp.152-3.
- 26 Anderson, M.D., *Looking for History in British Churches*. John Murray. London. 1951. p.78n.

- 27 Davidson, James, *History of Newenham Abbey*. London. 1843. p.60.
- 28 Pulman. op.cit p. 595.
- 29 Davidson, James, Collections for Axminster. Devon Record Office.
- 30 Pearce. op.cit.
- 31 Hill, David, *Atlas of Anglo-Saxon England*. Basil Blackwell. 1981.

I wish to express my gratitude to the Curator and Staff of the British Library for their generous help.

DEVON CENTENARIES

Compiled by Adrian Reed

NATHANIEL CARPENTER (1588-?1635). Divine and scientist. Son of Rector of Northleigh. At Oxford said to have had Calvinistic leanings. Supported by Bishop Usher who obtained preferment for him in Ireland. Published works on philosophy and geography. Later regretted that he had courted the maid rather than the mistress—divinity. His main study was in optics but unluckily his manuscript was either lost in the Irish Sea or ruined by having hot Christmas pies stood on it: accounts vary.

ROBERT CARY (?1615-1688). Divine and chronologist. Son of Sir George Cary of Cockington Court. After Oxford travelled on the Continent before being appointed Rector of Portlemouth. Became Moderator of the local Presbyterians but welcomed the Restoration. Was rewarded with the Archdeaconry of Exeter out of which he was shortly 'affrighted and ejected' by some 'great men then in power'. He returned to Portlemouth whence he published in 1677 his "Palaeologia Chronica", a valiant attempt to establish a chronological order of events between the Creation and Titus' sack of Rome.

Rt.Hon. WILLIAM COURTENAY, EARL OF DEVON (1807-1888). In House of Commons 1841-49 firstly as conservative then as Peelite. Secretary of the Poor Law Board under Lord Aberdeen, 1852-58. Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and then President of the Poor Law Board in the Derby/Disraeli government of 1866-68. Withdrew from politics on change of administration and developed extensive interests in railways in Britain and Ireland.

RICHARD RIGBY (1722-1788). Politician. A self-seeker who, when he could not get what he wanted from Frederick, Prince of Wales, transferred his nominal allegiance to the Duke of Bedford in whose interest he sat for Tavistock from 1754 to 1784. Collected a reputedly unequalled range of sinecures and offices culminating in 1768 with Paymaster of the forces. An unattractive character of whom it was said that the 'only virtue he possessed was that he drank fair'.

THE TOTNES NORTH END TURNPIKE TRUST

M.C. Lowe

In the period 1759-63 three turnpike trusts based in Totnes were set up. The first two, Totnes and Newton (1759) and Totnes and Bridgetown Pomeroy (1762), I have dealt with elsewhere¹; the third was set up in 1763 and became known as the Totnes North End Turnpike Trust. The petition to Parliament was introduced in the House of Commons on 10 February in that year; the resulting Bill took only six weeks to complete its passage through both Houses. As reported in the *Journal of the House of Commons* (vol.XXIX, p.448) it was

A Petition of the Gentlemen, Clergy, Freeholders, and Principal Inhabitants of the Towns and Boroughs of Totnes and Ashburton, and the several Parishes of Dartington, Staverton, Rattery, Dean Prior, Buckfastleigh, Harberton, Broadhempston, Holne, Widecombe, Buckland, Mannaton, and Isington, in the County of Devon, was presented to the House, and read; setting forth, That the Roads leading from the North End of Totnes to Staverton Bridge; and from thence through Pridhamsleigh, to the Three Tons adjoining the Turnpike Road, in the Parish of Ashburton; and from Staverton Bridge aforesaid to Austin's Bridge; and from Totness to Cobbaton Lane End, next to Willing Cross; and from thence to Crabtree Cross, in the Parish of Dean Prior; and from Willing Cross aforesaid to Huxham's Cross; and from thence to the End of Marsh Lane; and from Simon's Tree Barn, in the Parish of Harberton; and from Cott, in Dartington aforesaid, to Whitely Brook; are so very ruinous, incommodious, and narrow in several Places, that the same cannot be sufficiently amended, widened, and kept in Repair, by the ordinary Course of Law: And therefore praying, that leave may be given to bring in a Bill for amending, widening, and keeping in Repair, the said Roads, in such Manner as the House shall think proper.

During the proceedings, Thomas Lane, first Clerk and Treasurer of the proposed Trust, gave evidence in support, and after the usual procedure, the Royal Assent was given to 'An Act for amending and widening several Roads leading from or near the North End of the Town and Borough of Totnes, in the County of Devon'² on 24 March.

The main route of the turnpike ran from near Malt Mill (where there was a toll gate) up Barracks Hill past Longcause and Cott to Shinner's Bridge, turning right at Huxham's Cross to Staverton Bridge, then via Pridhamsleigh to the west end of Ashburton, where it joined the road of the Ashburton Trust, with which the Totnes North End Trust eventually merged.

Further Acts followed in 1784 and 1805³. By the 1790s the operational centre of the Trust had shifted to Ashburton, as is apparent from an advertisement in the *Sherborne Mercury* for 17 February 1794:



Notice is hereby given, That the Trustees of the Turnpike Road "leading from or near the North End of the Town and Borough of TOTNES," will be LET by AUCTION, on Saturday the 15th of March next, by two of the clock in the afternoon, in St. Laurence's Chapel, Ashburton, The TOLLS arising at MALT MILL and CROSSING GATES, in the parish of Dartington, for one year from Lady-day next, for such rent as they shall set on the same.

RICHARD JACKSON.

Ashburton, February 1, 1794.

An important new Act was obtained by the Trust in 1805¹. . . for amending the Roads leading from or near the North Side of the Town of Totnes, towards Ashburton, in the County of Devon, and for building a Bridge at or near a place called Emmett, across the River Dart'.

The Preamble to the Act called for the construction and turnpiking of a new line of road between the two towns on the grounds that ' . . . the Roads leading from Ashburton to Totnes are very circuitous and hilly, and are in some Parts thereof very narrow, incommodious, and greatly out of Repair, and it would be of great public Utility, and particularly advantageous to the Inhabitants of the Towns of Ashburton and Totnes and Places adjacent, if a more direct and convenient Communication between the said Towns were made'. It went on to detail the new route, which was to run as follows:

making Turnpike . . . the present Road leading from and out of the Turnpike Road at or near to Dart Bridge, in the Parish of Ashburton, unto or near Austins Bridge, otherwise Kilbury Bridge, in the Parish of Staverton, and by widening part of the present Turnpike Road leading from the said last mentioned Bridge to Huxhams Cross, in the Parish of Dartington, and diverting and turning the Course of the same Road at or near Weston, in the said Parish of Staverton, round the West Side of a certain Hill near the same, through certain Lands near the said Hill, and building a new Bridge across the River Dart near Emmetts, in the same Parish, and making and maintaining a new Road from the last mentioned Road, at or near Emmetts aforesaid, through certain adjoining and neighbouring Lands into a Part of the same Road at or near Huxhams Cross aforesaid; and also by making and maintaining a new Turnpike Road, from the present Turnpike Road at or near Shinner's Bridge, in the Parish of Dartington, into and through certain Fields in the same Parish, near the same Bridge, belonging to Arthur Champernown Esquire, and from thence into and through an Orchard, now or lately belonging to -- Somers, and from thence into and through a certain Lane, called Puddivans, otherwise Puddivans Lane, and such of the Lands adjoining thereto as shall be requisite to widen the same, and from thence into and through a certain Field, called Keilands, belonging to the said Arthur Champernown, and from thence into and through a certain Marsh belonging to the said Arthur Champernown, and from thence into and through a certain Meadow or Piece of Land and Orchard, belonging to John Wise Esquire, and from thence into and through a certain Garden and House, belonging to

John Adams Bartlett Esquire, and from thence into the Street leading through the Town of Totnes aforesaid. . . .

As portions of the new road were to be 'made passable for Carts and Carriages', the corresponding sections of the old road were to be disturnpiked. The Crossing Lane and Pridhamsleigh toll houses and Gates were to continue. Tolls charged at the gates of the Trust varied from one (old) penny 'For every Horse, Mule, Ass, or other Beast of Burthen, laden or unladen, and not drawing' up to ten shillings (50p) for a 'Wheel Carriage, laden with Timber, Wood, or Trees, drawn by Four Horses or other Beasts of Draught' and 'using Wheels of less Width than Nine Inches'. Only one toll per day was to be charged, however, provided that the toll ticket was produced at each gate.

The Act of 1809⁵ amalgamated the Totnes North End Trust with the Ashburton Trust (founded in 1755 and covering the road from Chudleigh Bridge to Brent Bridge, part of the main London to Plymouth post road) to form the Ashburton and Totnes Consolidated Turnpike Trust. From this time on, this article will only be concerned with that part of the new Trust which covered the roads of the old Totnes North End Trust.

An interesting and rather amusing sidelight on the treatment of the roads can be seen in the following cases presented to Quarter Sessions at Epiphany 1807⁶. One Isaac Stuart was charged

For digging a Gutter or Drain in length 16 Feet in Depth 8 Inches & in width 12 Inches for conveying a Stream of Water running on the North Side and adjoining the Highway between Ashburton and Totnes to run through the said Gutter and Drain so dug across the said Road into certain Lands belonging to the said Isaac Stuart lying on the South Side of the Same Highway and in the Parish of Dartington--2nd Count Stopping the Watercourse with Gravel 3d Count same as first--Last 2 Counts with Force of Arms & c.

At the same Sessions the County itself was presented for the lack of repair to

The common Bridge over the Dart called Austins Bridge in the parishes of Buckfastleigh and Staverton in the Kings Common Highway leading from Buckfastleigh to Totnes.

The bridge was no better two years later, when the county bridge surveyor, James Green, reported 'This bridge is altogether in such a deplorable state that I conceive any sum expended in repairs would be next to thrown away . . . it is even seen to shake in every considerable flood'⁷.

A further Act passed in 1830³ did not provide any new roads within the Ashburton to Totnes part of the system, but divided the roads into three Districts, those with which we are concerned forming the Second District. Toll Gates were now in operation at Dart Bridge (between Ashburton and Buckfastleigh), at Austin's Bridge, Crossing, and Malt Mill.

The next Act, that of 1835⁹, caused some concern when it was introduced into the Commons. The new proposed routes worried both Buckfastleigh and South Brent (petitions opposing the Act were received from inhabitants of both places). The inhabitants of Totnes were particularly opposed to the intention to turnpike a new line of road from Shinner's Bridge to Marley:

. . . the line of Road proposed, from Ashburton by Marley, to Brent Bridge, is half a mile longer than the present Road: that the present Road can, by some alterations, be made a much shorter and more level Road than the proposed line, and at less than half the expense; that the Branch line from Marley to Skinner's Bridge, proposed in the above Bill, will make the Road from Totnes to Plymouth a mile longer than it is at present, will materially injure the greater part of the town of Totnes, by diverting the main Road to Plymouth and the west of England, which now passes through nearly the whole of the town, but which, by the proposed Branch line, would pass through only a small part of it. . . .

In spite of all this, when the Act received the Royal Assent on 17 June 1835, it included the following provision:

and also for making, improving, and maintaining a new Line of Road from or near the West End of the Village of Dean Prior, by Dean Chrch and Whiteaxon Cross by Marleyford, to Brent Bridge; and One other new Line of Road branching out of the said last-mentioned new Line of Road at or near Marley Lodge, by Rattery Mill, Venton, and Yarner, into the present Turnpike Road leading from Ashburton to Totnes near Shinner's Bridge . . .

The much simplified scale of tolls is of interest:

For every Horse or other Beast drawing any Coach, Hearse, Chaise, or other Carriage, any Sum not exceeding Nine-pence:

For every Horse or other Beast drawing any Waggon, Cart, Van, Caravan, or other Wheel Carriage whatsoever, having the Fellies of the Wheels thereof of the Breadth of Six Inches at the Bottom or Soles thereof, any Sum not exceeding Nine-pence, and of less Width any Sum not exceeding One Shilling:

For each Wheel of every Coach or Carriage and of every Waggon or other Wheel Carriage whatsoever which shall be propelled, worked, or used on the said Roads by Steam, Gas, or by any mechanical or other Power, and without the Assistance of any Horse or other Beast, any Sum not exceeding Five Shillings:

For every House or other Beast drawing any Wheel Carriage laden with Timber, whether converted or unconverted, any Sum not exceeding One Shilling and Sixpence:

For every Carriage with Three or more Wheels drawn by One Horse or other Beast, any Sum not exceeding One Shilling:

For every Horse or other Beast not drawing, any Sum not exceeding One Penny Halfpenny:

For every Bull, Cow, or other Bullock, the Sum of One Penny:

For every Calf, Pig, Sheep, or Lamb, the Sum of One Halfpenny:

For every Carriage without Horses with Four Wheels, fastened or attached to any other Cart or Carriage, the Sum of One Shilling; and with Two Wheels, the Sum of Sixpence.

In 1876, as part of the Annual Turnpike Acts Continuance Act¹⁰, the life of the Trust was extended to '1st of November 1878, and no longer'. No money was to be expended on repair of the roads and no interest was to be paid. Immediately before the expiry of the Trust several of the Toll Houses were sold off. That at Austin's Bridge went to the Ecclesiastical Commissioners for £25; Puddaven (Totnes) was sold for £90 to the Great Western Railway; Dart Bridge Toll House fetched £105, being bought by Margaret Baroness de Virte (the house survived until 1972 when it was demolished during the construction of the A38 dual carriageway).

The above study is based on what little material survives, mainly the House of Commons Journals and the relevant Acts of Parliament, together with contemporary newspaper advertisements, and Quarter Sessions papers. No books or papers kept by Trust officials seem to have survived, though there is always hope that some may suddenly reappear.

Notes

- 1 M.C. Lowe, *Turnpikes and Tollgates*, Totnes, 1987.
- 2 3G.3 c.38.
- 3 24G.3 c.64 and 45G.3 c.75.
- 4 45G.3 c.75.
- 5 49G.3 c.127.
- 6 Devon Record Office, Register of Roads Presented, 1797-1809. QS 111/1.
- 7 Quoted in John Copeland, *Roads and their Traffic, 1750-1860*, Newton Abbot, 1968, p.19. The report on Devon's county bridges is in the Devon Record Office.
- 8 11G. & 1W.4 c.xcviii.
- 9 5W.4 c.xxxv.
- 10 39 & 40V. c.39.

THORVERTON BRIDGE

A. B. George

I was fascinated by Ian Stoyle's postcard picture of Green's Thorverton bridge of 1813 in the October 1987 issue of the Devon Historian. Things that are no longer with us are easily forgotten and Green's bridge must have been his largest single span arch at 84 feet (the next largest at Chudleigh is 62 feet) and the photograph shows that it had a rise/span ratio of 1:3. This made the roadway about 30 feet above low water level requiring long approach ramps between retaining walls that must have been very tiresome for horse-drawn traffic. For a masonry bridge less rise of the arch would have produced greater horizontal forces which might have caused the abutments to slide apart on the soil beneath them.

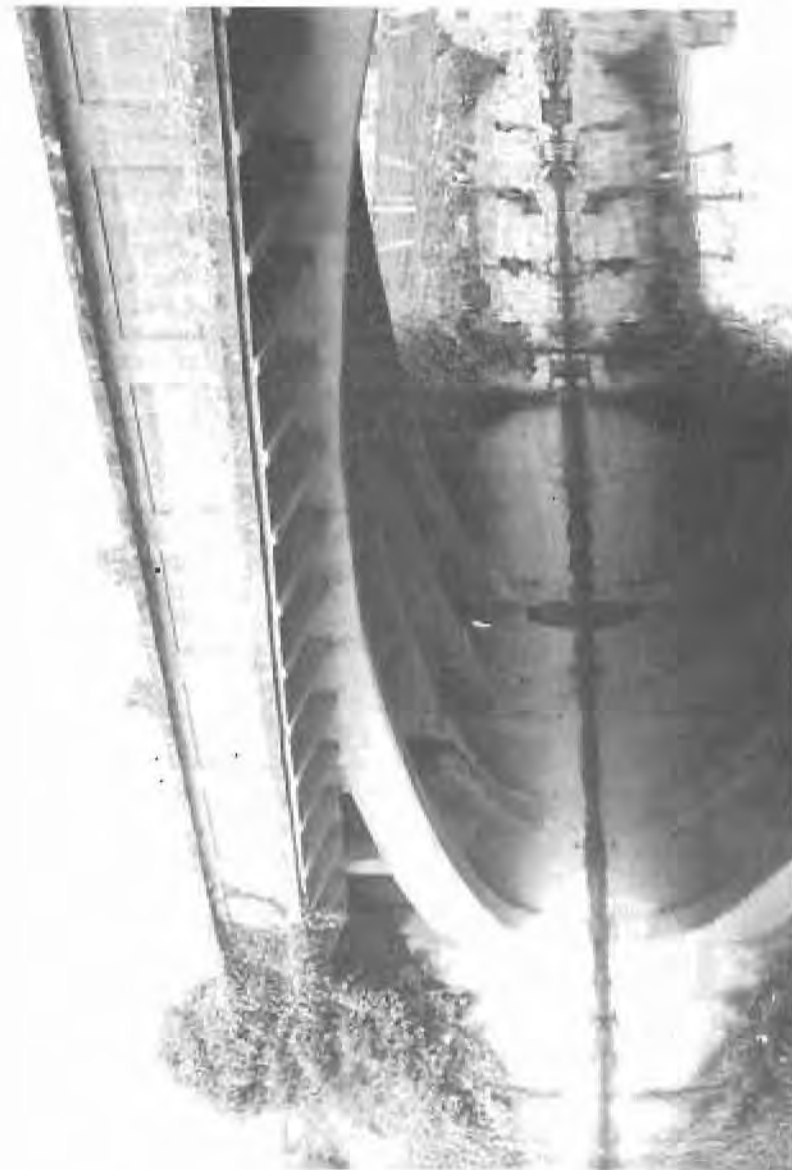
The successor bridge also had an interesting history. In 1906 there were two County Surveyors of Devon and the northern surveyor was Mr Samuel Ingram who had been in post since 1898 having previously been the District County Surveyor for Bridgwater, Somerset. In 1906 Ingram reported to a special meeting of the Bridges, Main Roads and County Buildings Committee that part of the approach to the old bridge had given way and that he had made it temporarily safe for traffic. The residents of the neighbourhood petitioned for the renewal of the bridge and approaches and the Committee later decided to ask Ingram for plans and an estimate for reconstruction.

In May 1907 Ingram submitted plans and an estimate of £1750 for the new bridge and approaches. The Committee called for tenders from contractors. They received nine tenders of which three were for an alternative design by the consulting engineers, Messrs L G Mouchel, and one a design by the Indented Bar company. The lowest tender was accepted and this was to the County Surveyor's design and was from Mr H Berry of Crediton in the sum of £1630. It was August 1907. This single span bridge over the river Exe was to be a very early example of reinforced concrete construction and is the only road bridge crossing for the 9 miles between Cowley and Bickleigh. It comprises four reinforced concrete arch ribs of 84 feet span and 6 feet rise spaced at 6 feet centres. Each rib is of section 15 inches by 30 inches and the ribs carry a cantilevered reinforced concrete deck 21 feet 6 inches wide between reinforced concrete parapets. A report of a Committee meeting tells us that the bridge was completed and opened on 1 December 1908 after being tested to a load of 66 tons. This load caused the middle two arch ribs to deflect 3/32 inch in the centre of the span and the outer ribs 1/16 inch. The final cost was £2392.

Unfortunately the story of this successful early construction is spoiled when we read that the District Auditor had reservation on the manner in which the contract had been conducted. He reported this to the Committee who made enquiries. They concluded that the Surveyor had been unwise in making payments in advance of completion of the work and that as he had lost their confidence he should retire from office. In November 1911 Mr W P Robinson was appointed Surveyor in Mr Ingram's place.

Very few road bridges were built in Devon between the turn of the century and the outbreak of the first world war. It is the more remarkable therefore that one of these

was a reinforced concrete structure of elegant appearance which has merely required some guniting of additional concrete covering to maintain it over a period of nearly 80 years. The use of a new method of construction, namely reinforced concrete, for a major river crossing enabled the steep road approaches to be removed and the successful design reflected great credit on the engineering ability of the designer, Mr S Ingram.



Thorverton Bridge, completed in 1908.

OKEHAMPTON AND DISTRICT MUSEUM OF DARTMOOR LIFE

Alan Endacott

The Okehampton and District Museum of Dartmoor Life was first opened in 1981 following the acquisition of an old courtyard site off West Street next to the historic White Hart Hotel. It is run by a charitable trust who set about restoring the interesting set of buildings in 1983 with a £52,000 MSC Community Programme scheme. This concentrated mainly on renovating a large three storey former mill and warehouse which was built in 1811. This now houses the bulk of the museum's collection. The money came from many different sources including local fund raising and grants from the Manpower Services Commission, local authorities, the English Tourist Board, Countryside Commission, Area Museum Council for the South West, Dartmoor National Park and charitable trusts such as the Northcott Devon Foundation, Pilgrim Trust, Ernest Cook Trust and the Manifold Trust.

Since then another scheme costing a further £23,000 has seen the provision of a visitors' car park and the restoration of two old cottages in the courtyard. One of these cottages was the birthplace of Okehampton's great benefactor, Sydney Simmons in 1840, when his parents ran a printing works in the courtyard. After going away to school and serving a drapery apprenticeship in Plymouth he obtained the post of North American representative for a London carpet company and hence began a life of travel and adventure. Whilst in the USA he secured the rights to a carpet cleaning invention. He then set up two companies in London and over the years amassed a considerable fortune. He never forgot his native town however and made numerous gifts for different projects including buying and restoring the castle for the town and giving Simmons Park, the Golf Links, almshouses, bowling green, and money for various other projects. There is currently a special display on the life and work of Sydney Simmons in the museum which has been staged by the Okehampton and District Local History Centre.

As well as covering local history generally the museum has a theme of Dartmoor Life and aims to interpret the moor's unique heritage. Present displays show the geology and pre-history of Dartmoor together with its fascinating medieval history. A 'cradle to grave' display depicts the lives of ordinary people in this often inhospitable area with relics of their everyday lives. An industry gallery illustrates the many, often unprofitable, ventures of man on Dartmoor such as glass and ice making as well as medieval tin streaming and later underground mining. Some of the old tanners' methods are brought to life with the aid of a working model of a stamping and blowing house. There are many examples of mining and quarrying tools and machinery. Another gallery covers farming and rural crafts such as those of the blacksmith and wheelwrights with yet more tools, machines and implements. These include a Devon box wagon, a 1946 David Brown tractor and a 1922 bullnose Morris farm pick-up.

Amongst the displays are many old photographs and engravings of the area. These are soon to be enhanced by a collection now being compiled by the Okehampton and District Local History Centre which is an MSC Community

Programme scheme. Many local people have brought in photographs to be copied and more would be welcomed. The project is also looking for old documents and people with local memories which could be recorded. For further information please contact Martin Dyer at Okehampton Town Hall, tel. 4548.

Despite having the fine old mill building to house the museum's growing collection we are already short of space and so it will be necessary to build a two storey extension next year. This is likely to cost over £20,000 for the materials alone for which funds are now being sought. It will house displays on the wartime history of the area and transport and communications on one floor and a new rural crafts gallery on the ground floor. Here we will reconstruct blacksmith's and wheelwright's shops and have displays on thatching and cidermaking among other things. The extension will also allow us space to re-arrange the farming gallery and to build a new display on corn milling linked with a 16' diameter waterwheel which was rescued from a farm on the site of the new Roadford Reservoir. This now stands along side the mill building having been restored to working order under our last scheme with a great deal of voluntary assistance from Mr. A.R. Hood of Torquay to whom we are most grateful.

The museum is open from 10.30 - 4.30, Monday - Friday all year and also on Saturdays from April - October and Sundays in the summer school holidays but is closed over the Christmas period.

Further information on the museum may be obtained from the Curator, Alan Endacott at the Museum, 3 West Street, Okehampton, tel. (0837) 3020.



THE REVD. DR. GEORGE OLIVER AND THE ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH OF ST. NICHOLAS IN THE MINT

John Havill

Behind the door marked 'Exeter College of Art Printing Department' in St. Olaves Close, off St. Mary Arches Street, is a passage way leading through to The Mint, for the use of staff and students, and not a right of way. Inside the door on the wall are three memorial tablets, two are so weathered that they cannot be read except that the date can be seen, MDCCXXXVIII, but the third one is legible and the inscription reads:

To The Sainted Memory of
Maria
The Beloved Daughter of
The Right Hon. Sir Michael O'Loughlen Baronet
Master of The Rolls In Ireland
Who Died XV January
MDCCCXXXIX
Aged XX Years

A little further down the passage a door on the right leads to a yard, where there is a stack of headstones, but the top one is weathered and cannot be read, and the others cannot be examined because the top one is so heavy that it cannot be moved. On the top one is just discernable the letters 'HSE' the abbreviation for Hic sepultus est, 'Here lies buried'. So in 1838 and 1839 here was the site of a burial ground, and this was in use long before those years and after. The people commemorated were Roman Catholics who worshipped in the first Roman Catholic Church to be built in Exeter after the Reformation. The Church is still there, now used by the Printing Department, and although alterations have been made, new windows put in, and the chancel demolished and a large room constructed, most of the original can be seen including the well worn front step, the pillars for the gallery, and the plaster work in the ceiling from where the chandelier hung. If the legend is true it would have been near the step to the High Altar that the Revd. Dr. George Oliver, the much revered parish priest was buried. There is some doubt about this as the inscription on the plaque on the front of his house in The Mint shows. It reads:

George Oliver
Catholic Priest Created
Doctor of Divinity
By Pope Gregory XVI 1844
Lived Here 1807-1861
& Rests Near This Spot
To Commemorate
His Lifelong Services
To His Fellow Citizens
In History
Literature Benevolence
And Pastoral Zeal

After the Reformation the spiritual needs of the Roman Catholics in Exeter were looked after by itinerant priests, always in fear of arrest, and even as late as 1746

the counties of Devon and Cornwall could only provide three or four priests at one time, and the nearest resident priest to Exeter at that time was at Ugbrook, the home of the Clifford family. In 1762 the first resident priest was appointed to Exeter, and a census of 1767 revealed that there were twenty-eight Roman Catholics in Exeter. Mass had been celebrated in King John's Tavern in South Street since 1745, and then services took place in Bartholomew Street, and later a lease was taken of part of St. Nicholas' Priory. In 1788 the premises were purchased, and a chapel was built in the site of the Chapter House of the dissolved Priory. The first Mass was celebrated on the Feast of the Epiphany in 1792, and thus came into being and remained the only Roman Catholic Church in Exeter until the Sacred Heart Church was built in South Street, some eighty-two years later.

George Oliver, the Roman Catholic divine and historian of Exeter, was born at Newington, now in south east London, on 9 February 1781, and was educated at Stoneyhurst College, and for five years afterwards taught the humanities there. He was promoted to Holy Orders in May 1806 and in October 1807 was sent to the mission at St. Nicholas in Exeter. He retired on 6 October 1851 but continued to reside in the priory, and occupied the same room until he died on 23 March 1861. On his retirement the communicants numbered 180 and the chapel had been enlarged.

During the cholera epidemic between July and September 1832 when 400 people died in Exeter, his untiring service to the sick and dying, without any thought of his own safety, gained him the esteem of all, and Exonians subscribed towards a silver salver which was presented to him. In 1984 it was said to be among the silver in the Guildhall, but I am told by Mr Jeremy Pearson of the Royal Albert Memorial Museum, that it is not now in the collection.

Dr. T.N. Brushfield in a paper read at the Devonshire Association meeting at Seaton in July 1885, referred to Oliver as:

... our great ecclesiastical antiquary, whose numerous works, relating principally to this county, and constituting the standard authorities on the subjects they describe, must amply justify his undeniable claims to be considered as a Devon worthy.

The Revd. Dr. George Oliver is also commemorated in a stained glass window in the north wall of the Church of the Sacred Heart.

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THE ROADFORD RESERVOIR ARCHAEOLOGICAL PROJECT, WEST DEVON

Simon Timms

A unique opportunity for detailed investigation of an area of traditional Devon landscape arises from South West Water's scheme for the new Roadford Reservoir which is currently being constructed as the last major reservoir needed to serve the region. The reservoir is centred on the River Wolf, a tributary of the Tamar and will flood some three square miles of farms, fields and woods in a remote part of Devon to the north of the A30 and midway between Okehampton and Launceston.

The villages such as Bratton Clovelly and Germansweek which lie closest to the new reservoir are small rural communities and the land which is to be flooded is made up of scattered and isolated farms often set back from the road down back lanes. The antiquity of dispersed patterns of rural settlement such as this has long attracted the historian's attention. Recent research suggests that farms which are today single holdings were previously larger hamlets. Five historic farmsteads are being demolished to make way for the new reservoir and documentary research shows that at least four of these were hamlets as recently as 150 years ago. The farmsteads include East and West Wortha (first documented in the fourteenth century and with a surviving 17th century farmhouse), Shop Farm and Hennard Mill. Hennard is perhaps the most interesting of these. Today a single cottage stands on this site, but 200 years ago at least seven dwellings were grouped around 'the town floor' of a hamlet, which also had two mills, one for corn and the other a mill for fulling cloth. The platforms of these abandoned houses still survive as well-preserved earthworks and, although 'the village of Hennard Mill' is first documented only in 1613, trial excavation has produced significant quantities of medieval pottery. The documents also suggest that Hennard was the medieval mill site for the manor of Southweek, first recorded in Domesday Book.

Over the last five years there has been growing recognition that the Roadford reservoir scheme presents a unique opportunity to investigate the origins and development of historic hamlets and farmsteads in the South-West. Limited work on documentary research and building recording was begun by Devon County Council in 1984 but it was not until the summer of 1987 that resources were made available for more extensive rescue investigations. These are now being conducted by the Exeter Museums Archaeological Field Unit, which began extensive excavations of the Hennard Mill hamlet in August 1987. This excavation will continue in 1988, when it is hoped to start excavations on West Wortha as well. Shop Farm and other sites will be excavated as time and resources allow, bearing in mind that the Wolf valley is due to be flooded in 1990. As part of the reservoir scheme, the whole valley is to be literally stripped bare of all hedges, trees and structures. Partly because of this, palaeoenvironmental research, hedgerow survey and other types of landscape analysis are seen as major elements in the rescue project. Documentary research, oral history and educational work with schools are also being pursued.

The Roadford Rescue Project is being funded by South West Water, English

Heritage, the Manpower Services Commission and the Royal Commission on the Historical Monuments of England. The project is being organised by Devon County Council and is being undertaken by the Exeter Museums Archaeological Field Unit.

REVIEWS

Georgian Tiverton: the political memoranda of Beavis Wood, 1768-98 John Bourne (ed.), (Devon and Cornwall Record Society, New Series volume 29). 1986. xxvii + 180pp.

As MPs for Tiverton from 1734 until 1832, the Ryder family amassed a collection, of which over 3,000 items still survive, of letters and other documents from their constituents. Copies of all the Tiverton material are held at the Devon Record Office. An awesome task, therefore, faced John Bourne, a distinguished historian of nineteenth-century political patronage, in choosing a selection; the subtitle indicates his decision to offer not a cross-section but one discrete series of documents. The franchise of Tiverton rested in the hands of the corporation, a self-perpetuating group of 24 Capital and Assistant Burgesses. To ensure their re-election the Ryders had to watch the corporation very carefully. Their chief ally and informer was the Town Clerk, Beavis Wood, who sporadically dispatched memoranda on the latest developments in corporation politics. All 84 of these are reproduced here, together with a list of the mayors, brief biographical notes on the main participants, and a full index.

How illuminating a guide to Georgian Tiverton is this volume? Wood had a good style, clear and brief but with an eye for evocative detail, and he was an amused observer of the incredibly intricate personal relationships among the corporation. As a study of human behaviour amongst an enclosed group this is fascinating. But eventually the reader, like Wood, may begin to tire of these oligarchical factions, and wonder whether anything deeper lay behind them; and how far the corporation's activities are representative of Tiverton life. Here the documents selected are tantalising rather than satisfying. The Ryders knew Tiverton very well, so that Wood simply reported what had occurred and who voted for whom, leaving the Ryders to fathom 'springs and causes'. The only constant is an anti-corporation group, who combined dislike of Tiverton's closed leadership with broader radical aims. But only in the 1790s do Wood's memoranda become more informative on town politics generally, reflecting the growing pressure to win over public opinion to the 'King and Church' loyalism which Wood espoused. Not that this battle for Tiverton hearts and minds was new to the 1790s; earlier Wood drops plenty of hints to indicate that Tiverton politics were always lively and complex. The basis for this lay in the richness of Tiverton's institutional structure. In addition to the corporation, this liberty, with its own quarter-sessions, had active manorial courts, schools, a corporation of the poor and other charities, many clubs, including those of the textile journeymen and labourers, and a variety of churches, including the two town churches and various chapels of the enormous Tiverton parish with its four

rectors and several curates. The corporation never had proper control of town life.'

Casual reading of this collection might confirm the received opinion that Georgian towns were corrupt backwaters, with gentry patrons controlling a clique of parochial clients. Bourne's introduction warns against such a reading, but his selection and editorial work tends to encourage it. The notes are strong on personal ties, but weak on explaining the context, local and national, of many points. Readers might justifiably expect more guidance on, say, the Wilkite significance of a banquet held with 45 guests or the town's Corporation of the Poor. To put these documents in perspective would require constant reference to the other material in the Ryder collection, which would give a broader picture of local politics, and also a sense of how the Ryders *worked* for their constituents to earn their support.

Jonathan Barry

The Monks of Cowick, by Geoffrey Yeo, privately printed, 1987, pamphlet, £1.50.

Cowick Priory near Exeter was a small Benedictine monastery, founded in about 1100 and enduring (save for a break of twelve years) until the Reformation, as a dependency first of Bec-Hellouin in Normandy and later of Tavistock. With its dissolution in 1539, the site passed along with other Tavistock property to the Russell family, who built a house there, Cowick Barton, which is now an inn. The priory was always a modest foundation, probably never housing more than six or seven monks, and Mr Yeo once calls it insignificant, but it is by no means lacking in interest. It had its own saint, Walter of Cowick, with his shrine in the church, and it was chosen as a burial place by two heads of the Courtenay family, including the first earl of Devon. Most important today is that many of its records survive among the archives of the dukes of Bedford (now in the Devon Record Office), and Mr Yeo has used them to good effect in writing this history. His account is excellent: original and comprehensive. It covers the priory's history, buildings, estates, internal life and external relations with Bec and Tavistock, bishop and king. There is also useful information about the church and parish of St Thomas in early times. The research is good, with reliable footnotes, the style entertaining and clear, and the context well understood and presented. Cheap at the price, and with a map and six photographs to boot, it is indeed a model of its kind and will repay close study, not only by students of monastic and manorial topics, but by anyone planning a good smallscale local history.

Nicholas Orme

Iron Horse to the Sea: Railways in South Devon by John Pike. Bradford on Avon, 1977. pp.158. ISBN 0 948578 12 2. £3.95

For its price this is a generously illustrated book with more than 50 reproductions of contemporary photographs which catch the nostalgia for the days of steam and excursions. The arrival and extension of the railway was of enormous importance to the ports and resorts of South Devon from widening the market for Brixham fish to

opening up Torbay to the northern excursionist particularly in the 1930s. On August bank holiday 1938 20,000 descended upon Torquay. The Great Western's holiday posters made a contribution to that part of national culture so loved by John Betjeman. It was the railway too that created Dawlish Warren as a holiday centre, even helping to preserve it from final erosion.

John Pike charts the creation of all the lines in the area, and in some cases their failure, and pays due homage to Brunel and the end of broad gauge in 1892. The South Devon's lax safety arrangements are dealt with and its financial sleight of hand in cheating the Torbay and Brixham out of rightful profits. Ironically one of the final photographs has Lord Beeching smiling at the inaugural special of the Dart Valley Railway in May 1967, rather as a Victorian naturalist might on taking aim at an endangered species for his curiosity cabinet. This volume has much both for the railway enthusiast and those interested in local history.

J H Porter

The South-West to AD 1000 by Malcolm Todd, 1987. Longman Group UK. (a volume in the *Regional History of England* series, general editors Barry Cunliffe and David Hey). £12 paperback, 0 582 49273-4CSD, £19.95 hardback, 0 582 49274-2PPR.

This is a substantial book of some 338 pages which is intended to cover the prehistory and history of Devon and Cornwall to the period just before the Norman Conquest. It is divided into ten chapters covering, firstly, the character of the peninsula and the work which has been carried out there, (a welcome discussion, this), the Palaeolithic and Mesolithic, the opening-up of the land, and two chapters on later prehistory (with a contribution by Andrew Fleming). These are followed by chapters on the Roman Conquest and the Roman Dumnonii, and two on post-Roman Dumnonia and Dumnonia and Wessex. The structure is the standard one for a work of this kind and Todd is wise to have followed it. The book is plentifully illustrated with 62 line drawings, including a series of distribution maps, and 13 plates.

A regional study of this kind, written for a wide audience of students, practising archaeologists and the interested public should serve two purposes: it should provide accurate, up-to-date information which is as comprehensive as possible, and it should offer an overview of time and place, a synthesis which bears the mark of the author's mind and transforms the material from a card index to an interesting narrative. This is a daunting task, and such books are more difficult to write than a single period study on the author's own specialisation. Todd's book makes a solid attempt at the first purpose. He presents a great deal of information, which is offered in a tone of cautious assessment and careful discussion. The approach is traditional—not much truck here with the New Archaeology—but this may be appropriate to its audience. There are some slips in detail, (for example, the Cypriot hook-tang weapons from Sidmouth mentioned on p.134 turned up in a domestic shed and certainly cannot be securely counted as a hoard find; the Enaharrus memorial mentioned on p.250 may once have stood on a track from the Tavy Valley to Dartmoor but has been in the vicarage garden at Tavistock for many years), but these do not amount to a fundamental criticism.

Much more disappointing is the lack of any integration of the material into a coherent pattern, either within individual chapters, or in the book as a whole. The quotation from Stenton at the beginning of chapter 10 that 'few questions in English history are more obscure' which leads to a 'warning' that 'any satisfactory account of the subject is not to be expected' might stand as the symbol of the book. It is, of course, perfectly true that in many areas the evidence is thin, but evidence will never be as good as the archaeologist would wish it to be. The problems of evidence and inference could have been emphatically set out in an Introduction, and referred to thereafter when necessary, and in the book itself a clear distinction could have been preserved between descriptive information and interpretative analysis. As it is, the impression gained is that Todd, as essentially a Romanist, is not comfortable with prehistoric or post-Roman material, and as a relative new-comer to the region he is still acclimatizing himself to the nature of the past in Devon and Cornwall.

Susan Pearce

Citadel, a history of the Royal Citadel, Plymouth, by R.F. Woodward. Devon Books, 1987. £10.95. 150pp., 45 maps and illustrations.

R.F. Woodward was a former R.A. officer, who served in the citadel as a gunnery instructor and staff officer and developed a research interest in what was initially an *ad hoc* fortification, begun in 1665, to protect Plymouth and thereby the south-west generally against the Dutch in an impending war. (Ironically its designer, Sir Bernard de Gomme, was a Dutchman.) It is clear that from the start the fort had an additional function in ensuring the internal stability of a region with a living tradition of turbulence now long lost. It turned out to be enduring as 'the largest fortification built' in England in modern times, over three decades in the initial erection and refurbished and extended since, notably for the Napoleonic wars. In 1698 Celia Fiennes described it as 'the finest and only thing in Plymouth town', looking 'very noble'. Mr Woodward, who is an apt and assiduous researcher and reporter, sets the Citadel in an historical context in a narrative that scrupulously records the good, the bad and the indifferent, without descending to the trivial. Of particular interest is a chapter recounting the persistent accusations of 'shameful speculations' at the Citadel revealed in 1794 in an indignant pamphlet (and other material) by a Lt. James Ford, addressed to his 'MOST PUISSANT SIRE' (his capitals), George III. Mr Woodward drily remarks that the lieutenant must have been an officer of the highest integrity but one 'whom both his superiors and his brother officers would have wished elsewhere'. In the event the Citadel never had to 'earn glory in heroic defence of town or dockyard', though in various unspectacular ways it played its part in the development of coastal defences and within the local community and beyond, a part clinched here by the text, the copious illustrations and the appendices (one usefully reprinting the Royal Warrant to the 1665 Commissioners).

Ivan Roots

THE DEVON HISTORY SOCIETY

Minutes of the 17th Annual General Meeting held at Exeter
on Saturday 23 October 1987

In the Chair, the President, Crispin Gill, Esq., OBE.

Apologies were received from Major Anderson, Mr J Havill and Professor I Roots.

1 Minutes

The minutes of the last Annual General Meeting (printed in *The Devon Historian*, April 1987) were read and approved.

Matters Arising—none.

2 Hon. Secretary's Report

Mrs S Stirling explained that the vice-chairman, Mr J Pike had acted as membership secretary, Dr. A. Grant as minutes secretary, and she (Mrs Stirling) had dealt with the remaining business. She thanked Mr D Edmund for his support and help. The Council had met four times to organise the programme and redraft the constitution. There had been successful conferences at South Brent and North Molton, the Society is represented on the committee of the Centre for South Western Historical Studies. Mr J Pike added that the supplementary membership list is now ready. There had been 50 new members in the past year. He welcomed a suggestion that Mr Edmund's membership leaflet should be circulated to local societies. The report was adopted.

3 Hon. Treasurer's Report

Mr D Edmund reported that total membership now stood at about 380. He presented the income and expenditure account, and pointed out that although he was not suggesting an increased subscription at present, this could not be ruled out for the future, as the cost of each issue of *The Devon Historian* was rising, when the current issue had been paid for, the balance would be about the same as last year's. The problem of chasing up subscriptions could be eased by standing orders. He appealed for someone to volunteer to deal with covenants, which could increase the Society's income by 25 per cent. He thanked Mrs Stirling and the Devon and Exeter Institution for facilities for dispatching and labelling. The accounts were adopted.

4 Hon Editor's Report

Mrs H Harris reported on the two issues of *The Devon Historian* published since the last AGM, thanked contributors, and said there was still space available in the forthcoming issue (Spring 1988). Contributions should be submitted by 30 November. Space limitations should be borne in mind, and footnotes were essential. The editor hopes to maintain the balance between different types of contribution, to cater for the varied interests of members.

The President thanked the officers for their reports and for running the Society well and efficiently over the past year.

5 Constitution

The proposed new constitution had been circulated with the AGM agenda. The President asked whether members agreed that the AGM should normally be held in Exeter (part 6). It was pointed out that the wording did not actually tie the AGM to Exeter. The President then agreed that no change was needed, and proposed that the constitution should be adopted as circulated. This was put to the vote and ratified, *nem. con.* The Council then stood down, with the exception of the President, whose position was not affected by the change of constitution, as he had been elected for three years.

6 Election of Officers and Council

The following officers were elected

Chairman, Professor J Youings, Vice-Chairman, Mr J Pike; Hon. Secretary, Mrs. S Stirling; Hon. Treasurer, Mr D Edmund; Hon. Editor, Mrs H Harris.

The following were elected to the Council

Mr R Bedward, Miss J Beer, Dr A Grant, Mr I Maxted, Mr A Reed, Professor I Roots, Mr K Stoneman, Mr G Tatham, Mrs F Wilkinson.

It was pointed out that there had been two other members of the former Council, Mr E Yates, who said he wished to stand down, and Mr J Bosanko, who was not present. The latter will be approached with a view to co-option, all the elected places having been filled.

7 Summer Conference 1988

Mr Pike explained that the spring meeting would mark the tercentenary of the landing of William III at Torbay, and that a summer meeting had originally been proposed to celebrate the quatercentenary of the Armada. In view of the numerous other Armada celebrations in Devon, members were asked whether the Society should proceed with this. Professor J Youings suggested that the Society might like to be associated instead with the Devon Maritime History Project's Armada Conference at the Crossmead Conference Centre, April 28-29 1988. The President suggested participation in the Historical Association's Plymouth Conference in mid-July 1988. It was agreed to ask the organisers of these events to circulate the Society's members when details of the spring conference were sent out. This will be at Brixham on 12 March 1988, with Professor I Roots and Dr D Davies as speakers. Visits to Brixham museums will be arranged.

8 Any Other Business

It was agreed that Mrs K Pymm should circulate details of a meeting of Friends of Morwellham, arranged for September 1988.

Mr R Bedward asked for members' views on the pattern of the Society's conferences. It was generally agreed that meetings 'scattered' around the country should continue.

Mr D Edmund asked for volunteers to act as auditors for the Society.

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