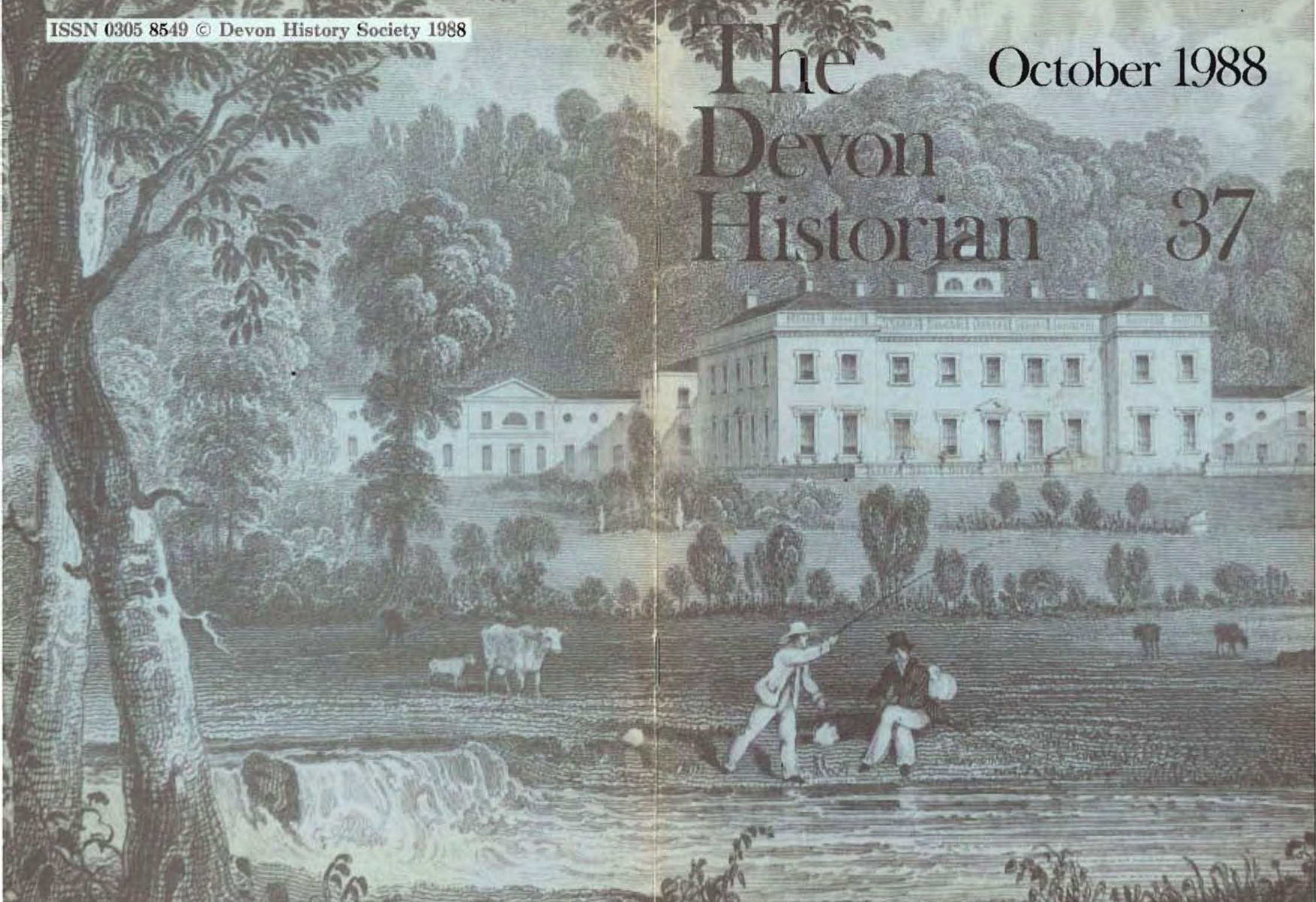


# The Devon Historian

October 1988

# 37



# DEVON HISTORY SOCIETY

## Past Presidents

Professor W.G. Hoskins (1969-72); Lady Aileen Fox (1973-4);  
Dr C.A. Raleigh Radford (1975-7); W. Best Harris (1978-80); Frank Booker (1981-2)  
Professor Joyce Youings (1983-6)

## OFFICERS

PRESIDENT	Crispin Gill
CHAIRMAN	Professor Joyce Youings
VICE-CHAIRMAN	John Pike
HON. SECRETARY	Mrs Sheila Stirling
HON. TREASURER	David Edmund
HON. EDITOR	Mrs Helen Harris
HON. PUBLICITY OFFICER	David Edmund
COUNCIL	Robert Bedward, Miss Joy Beer, John Bosanko, Dr Alison Grant, Ian Maxted, Adrian Reed, Professor Ivan Roots, Robin Stanes, Kenneth Stoneman, George Tatham, Mrs Freda Wilkinson.

## MEMBERSHIP

All correspondence relating to membership, personal local history interests and offers of work or assistance should be sent to the Vice Chairman, John Pike, 82 Hawkins Avenue, Chelston, Torquay TQ2 6ES.

## SUBSCRIPTIONS

*The Devon Historian* is available free to all members of the Devon History Society. Membership subscriptions for the current year are as follows: Individual: £5.00; Family: £6.00; Libraries, Museums, Schools and Record Offices: £5.00; Institutions and Societies: £7.00. Please send subscriptions to the Hon. Treasurer, David Edmund, 5 Lark Close, Pennsylvania, Exeter EX4 4SL.

## 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 30 November 1988. Books for review should be sent to Mrs S. Stirling, c/o Devon & Exeter Institution, 7 The Close, Exeter.

## DEVON HISTORY SOCIETY AGM

The AGM of the Society will take place in the Seminar Room of the Library, University of Exeter, on Saturday 29 October 1988 from 10.30 am to 4.00 pm.

The print on the cover is *Castle-Hill, near South Molton, Devonshire, the seat of Hugh, Earl Portescue*, steel engraving by T. Dixon after T. Allom from *Devonshire illustrated*, published in parts by Fisher, London, 1829-32. (Somers Cocks no.1116)

Notices .....	2
Explanations of buildings at the road edge E.L. and S.B. JONES .....	3
New contributors .....	8
A year in the life of a noble family and household—the Fortescues of Filleigh, spring 1772-spring 1773 STEVEN PUGSLEY .....	9
Social conditions in Lower Street, Plymouth in the nineteenth century W.N. BRYANT .....	15
The High Moor Railway JOHN DILLEY .....	21
Whiter than white? MICHAEL G. DICKINSON .....	24
Ilfracombe Museum JOY SLOCOMBE .....	26
John Tradescant & the Plymouth Strawberry DAVID J. HAWKINGS .....	28
Reviews:	
Security and defence in south-west England before 1800, ed. Robert Higham (Adrian Reed) .....	29
A living from the sea, ed. Michael G. Dickinson (David Starkey) .....	30
Devon Extracts 1665-1850. M. Snetzler & R. Hall (Peter Christie) .....	31
Uffculme: a Culm Valley parish, ed. Gordon A. Payne (J.H. Porter) .....	32
Sail and steam in Salcombe harbour, by Muriel and David Murch and Len Fairweather (John R. Pike) .....	32
A tale of two rivers, by Rosemary Anne Lauder (Helen Harris) .....	33
Down a cobbled street, by Sheila Ellis (Helen Harris) .....	33
Studies in British privateering, trading enterprise and seamen's welfare, 1775-1900, ed. Stephen Fisher (Adrian Reed) .....	34
The westcountrymen: ketches and trows of the Bristol Channel, by Gordon Mote (Adrian Reed) .....	35
The incredible Armada, by James Mildren (Adrian Reed) .....	35
Discovering Armada Britain, by Colin Elliott (Adrian Reed) .....	36
Devon County Magazine (J.H. Porter) .....	36
The North Devon Magazine (Helen Harris) .....	36
Kingston two hundred years ago .....	37
Revolt in the west, by John Sturt (Ivan Roots) .....	37
Dartmoor seasons, by Elizabeth Prince and John Head (Ivan Roots) .....	37
Devon centenaries, compiled by Adrian Reed .....	38
News items and notices .....	39

## 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.: 15 October 1988, etc. Thank you.

## EXPLANATIONS OF BUILDING AT THE ROAD EDGE

E.L. and S.B. Jones

In the countryside and towns of east Devon many buildings abut the roadway or street. Often there is no pavement or sidewalk. This feature occurs elsewhere but seems to be especially common here. It involves mainly dwellings but also farm buildings and barns, which were built either gable end on or fronting the street between the middle ages and this century. The practice was certainly common from the eighteenth century until about the time of the First World War. It is inconvenient, even dangerous, given modern traffic, but the question here is how we explain its prevalence in the past. Admittedly there may have been different reasons at different periods, in different situations, or for different types of building, and to disentangle all these would require a detailed survey. That we leave to local historians. For the moment we want to consider the styles of explanation offered for the phenomenon in general, since explanation rather than description is too seldom to the fore in local history.

Returning to this country from Australia we are struck by the feature more than the Devonians seem to be. Indeed we are struck by it even compared with our native Hampshire. As a result we have asked a range of people, including some historians, for their interpretations and have also raised the question at a meeting of the South Somerset and Avon Vernacular Buildings Research Group. The answers are interesting because of their diversity. They suggest that building on the roadline is too common for most people to think about it long enough to reject the first explanation that springs to their minds. However, once we begin to group and consider the types of explanation offered, the matter ceases to concern a piece of landscape trivia and becomes a deep puzzle which requires careful specification before we can usefully go out to look again and test the various hypotheses. The difficulty is not lessened by the fact that many of the explanations proposed need not be mutually exclusive. We think that considering them may be an interesting exercise because, as we mentioned, too much local history is merely descriptive. While description may satisfy the collector's urge in all of us it is only interpretation which can lift local history above antiquarianism. In attempting to answer any question the aim should be to arrive at the most consistent general explanation, the one which covers the greatest number of cases. That is what we will be seeking.

Which came first, house or road? Buildings nowadays standing right against the roadway may have stood back a little from the narrower roads needed in the past, quaint though this must seem given how narrow many Devon lanes still are. Surely however the carriageway needed for waggon traffic in, for example, eighteenth- or nineteenth-century Ottery St. Mary was no narrower than some streets are there today. Devon 'ship' waggons in particular were scarcely slender. In general the routes came first with many examples of houses built around corners, involving several changes in alignment. One can sometimes see straighter roof lines over the curved or angled lines of the walls beneath. In certain cases rocks acting like traffic bollards protrude from the base of walls into the carriageway and protective low fences or walls have been obtruded a foot or two by encroachment.

Some of the explanations for building at the road edge which have been suggested or have come into our own minds will not do, or cannot stand on their own or are

special cases of others. Some will not do for all periods. Let us list the explanations offered in no special order and mention some of their deficiencies as we go:

1. *Topography*—that is that steep sites limited the available space for both roadway and house lots. While sometimes compelling this can apply only in a minority of cases.
2. *Defence*—which prompted the crowding of settlements into the closest proximity. This could not apply to the many isolated cases or to buildings erected in recent centuries. Presumably it would have to be coupled with (9) below in order to explain its continuance into peaceful times. In any case it is an unlikely motive on the east Devon redlands where the primary form of Saxon settlement seems to have been the independent farmstead and where villages may have been later aggregations.
3. *Livestock control*—houses on the street were used to channel cattle which were being driven to and from the commons or wastes to the appropriate yard entrances. Gardens or any edibles at the front were to be avoided in the circumstances. While suggestive about the origins of the feature, this cannot explain the many individual road-edge buildings or those from relatively recent times.
4. *Planning*—planned medieval 'bastide' settlements like Honiton were neatly laid out with shops-cum-houses on the street and burgage plots behind. Villages may have copied this stylish symmetry. This is however unlikely to be a general explanation: it does not begin to cope with isolated instances. In any case, why was the form chosen in the first place?
5. *Neighbourliness*—a positive social desire to live cheek by jowl. We are sceptical about this as it flies in the face of the enormous English desire for privacy. Nowadays one is struck by the cramped front walls, gates and 'private no turning' notices which defend minute patches of land at the front of so many houses in England. These castellations inconvenience everyone including the homeowners themselves by making turning-in, parking and garaging all difficult. English people who have settled in North America or Australasia have abandoned most of such defences to the extent of having fenceless front gardens in American towns. It is much to the point that the American gardens are lawns: flower and vegetable growing are English diseases and in higher income societies a kitchen garden is a minority taste.  
Neighbourliness may conceivably have explained dense settlements in the past but Devon streets do not look neighbourly now. Has the 'fashion' changed (and if so how and why?) or was neighbourliness never the real reason why houses were crammed together on the street? In any case our primary question is why buildings are on the street rather than why they are close together.
6. *Advantages of Proximity*—such as sharing embers to light fires before the days of cheap flints and tinder or safety matches. Building houses side by side would allow sharing on one side of a road only whereas positioning houses close to the roadside would facilitate sharing in more directions. But this cannot account for the on-road location of isolated dwellings or the more recent examples. To help to do so this explanation would have to be accompanied by (9) below.
7. *Access*—people wanted immediate access to the roadway. A possible reason may have been that materials to pave muddy garden paths were relatively costly. In

- any case, why are so many doors at the side or back? More importantly, the argument is really about poverty rather than access and poverty can be translated as a relatively high price for land. (See also 10 and 12 below).
8. *The fact that many cottages in the past doubled as pubs or shops and sold most conveniently out of a front window.* This could have applied in only a small minority of cases.
  9. *Fashion, or rather convention*—though this obviously cannot account for the original tendency. It is in any case a surprisingly difficult style of argument that would be challenged by those who see economic choice (which certainly includes the location of buildings) as explicable only in terms of the *current* forces acting on the decision makers. In addition, arguing by 'fashion' requires us to explain why fashion sometimes changes. (Change it certainly did, as may be seen from the increasing number of dwellings set far enough back on their lots to make room for a flower garden and a piece of lawn at the front.) It is rare to find those historians who argue by fashion, convention, tradition, inertia, path-dependency or what is called hysteresis so specifying their model that one can see just what changes in conditions will have caused a break in trend—a change in the fashion.  
Nevertheless we should not dismiss this form of argument out of hand, as if history does not matter at all. Consider a small problem—why British domestic water systems are all vented ones with storage tanks, with the attendant disadvantages of winter freezing and unequal pressure between hot and cold water.<sup>1</sup>  
Explanations offered by the plumbing trade include: cost, despite the provision of lavish fittings and even gold taps in some new housing developments; no public demand (an information problem); never heard of unvented systems (an even worse information problem besetting some British plumbers themselves); and tradition—British systems have used household storage tanks since the beginning of piped water supplies in the seventeenth century when water was available to householders for such a small part of the day that they needed storage facilities.  
The real answer seems to be that no-one seems able to gain by making the first move towards change unless most other people change at the same time.<sup>2</sup> Change has to come from an influential group outside the system. It transpires that unvented systems are now available in Britain thanks to the reluctance, for religious reasons of recent Indian immigrants to wash in stored water.<sup>3</sup> Fashion thus can change but the necessary fillip seems to be an exogenous shift in demand and without this historical patterns can sometimes become 'locked in' for long periods. However building on the road edge is largely an individual, independent, decision, and it is not self-evident that so much of it would have come about without a more powerful advantage for the individual builder or occupant than merely doing what the neighbours had always done.
  10. *The value of keeping the vegetable garden in one piece and not devoting land to ornamentals, lawns, borders or paths.* This is a special case of (12) below.
  11. *Property rights*—which meant that land owners could make other people huddle their dwellings against rights of way or could build cottages for their workers and even their farms on thoroughfares. Given a high relative value of land (see 12 below) this explanation does not seem to have considerable force.

12. *Land was far more valuable in the past* despite much lower population densities. This certainly would account for small lots jam-packed and bordering public rights of way so as to save private land. We may be able to see the increasing willingness to use more land for houses and ornamental grounds and gardens over time as a result of rising incomes: this process is perhaps seen in the removal of country houses from their village neighbours into grounds set up in their parks beginning about the time of the Reformation and accelerating after the Civil war. Other factors, such as less need for the defence of individual large houses, were involved in this but later stages have obviously been permitted by rising incomes. An example is the establishment of flower gardens around Wiltshire farm houses from the third quarter of the nineteenth century, to which Richard Jefferies refers in *Hodge and his Masters*. A further stage has been the creation of front gardens even for small houses during this century.

As a refinement on the primary economic explanation consider the implications of something else we believe we have observed. That is that in lowlands or valleys more of the older properties are set back from the road than in steeper areas, even though modern roads in the lowland areas are the wider ones. If roads had been widened to carry more traffic they might be expected now to reach up to house walls which originally lay further back but it is precisely in the lower-lying areas that they do so the least.

Since land in the 'plain' in Devon is easier to work and usually more fertile than steeper land, why was there not more rather than less attempt to employ every scrap of it productively? The answer may be that, on the contrary, scraps of land were more valuable to subsistence farming communities in steeper territory so that they tended most to build right against the road. Once again, speculations of this sort probably need support from other arguments such as (9) and cannot possibly cover every detailed case. A statistical survey would disaggregate the problem usefully.

Why should any of these factors have operated more strongly in Devon than elsewhere? The answer to this question may be that they did not. We may simply be seeing a greater *survival* of properties contiguous with the roadway here. We know that east Devon towns were exceptionally prone to fires but many of these may have destroyed mainly the thatch and rafters, leaving thick cob walls, whereas houses of more flammable building materials elsewhere in southern England were completely destroyed.<sup>4</sup> Less destruction in Devon will have provided fewer opportunities to reposition houses a little back away from the street.

Summarising, and trying to bring the arguments together, the much higher relative value of land in the agricultural past will have meant small house lots. Landowners and farmers will have been unwilling to relinquish more than the barest minimum of land for housing (consider the cramped nature of many surviving dwellings—and the very poorest of houses will already have gone). A combination of high prices and the unequal ownership of land—i.e. the structure of property rights—could readily have forced houses onto small lots. Furthermore given a limited lot size and their property, the occupants would have been eager to keep the garden in one piece. They will have sown it with much needed vegetables and been unwilling to divide the lot so that a tiny and almost unworkable area was hived off. That practice came with rising incomes, a

less imperative need to grow only vegetables and the rise of ornamental gardens even for the poor.

All this would explain small lots and a preference for the garden in a single block but not necessarily an on-road location. Why were so many houses at the front of the lot, on the road? As we have said, houses at the *back* of small lots could still be close together and share certain facilities including party walls. Yet more would be close together if sited at the front on the roadway because they could be opposite another row of neighbours. The public right of way could be used instead of devoting more of the lot than absolutely necessary to pathways. Landlords and private house owners would both see the advantages of adjoining the public right of way.

At first sight this point may seem to fall under the access category but it was arguably at least as much a matter of using public goods to save the expense of devoting more of one's own land to pathways, in other words it really is an argument in terms of relative cost. What we have therefore is an economic explanation. Other things being equal, as economists say, a road-edge site would be cheapest. Where other things were not equal, one or more of the other factors we have listed may have come into play.

There were however many exceptions to choosing the cheapest site. They would have to be accounted for by the freedom from constraints permitted to the better off. As a rule we would therefore expect to see the proportion of buildings set back from the road gradually increase over the centuries, and the earlier cases belong to the wealthier. This does seem to be the case. It was only some time in this century that setting houses back to a uniform building line was required by local authorities.

Thus the explanation of the most casual landscape observation explodes even as we consider it. Two kinds of further work are needed. One is a survey of building positions and dates in east Devon against a control sample elsewhere in the country. Despite the difficulties of external dating, houses can be assigned as 'not later than' particular periods and this will do for present purposes. Such a survey is likely to reveal different patterns of building location and may suggest different combinations of factors operating in each of them. The other need is to specify precisely what observations would falsify any explanatory hypothesis put forward.

#### References

1. Inconsistent explanations (or no explanations) were given by representatives of various branches of the plumbing trade on the BBC radio 'Punters' Programme', 26 November 1987. We leave aside the parallel question of why there is no left or right consistency for positioning hot and cold taps in this country.
2. On this 'web' effect, see the section on Optimality in Kaushik Basu, Eric Jones and Ekkehart Schlicht, 'The Growth and Decay of Custom: the role of the new institutional economics in economic history', *Explorations in Economic History* 24 (1987), pp. 1-21.
3. One wonders in turn whether avoidance of stored water is itself a lagged tradition originally inspired by the health dangers of storing water in India.

4.E.L.Jones, 'Fire Disasters: the special case of East Devon', *The Devon Historian* 20 (1980), pp. 11-17; E.L. Jones, M. Turner and S. Porter, *A Gazetteer of English Urban Fire Disasters, 1500-1900* (Norwich: Geo Books, 1984).

## NEW CONTRIBUTORS

**S.B. Jones** is the wife of our established contributor—her co-author—Professor Eric Jones. She is a school-teacher.

**Steven Pugsley** is a Devonian by birth and ancestry, post-graduate of the University of Exeter, recording the country house in Devon from the 17th to 19th centuries.

**John Dilley** comes of a railway family and has a life-long interest in the subject. He came to live in Devon five years ago and has worked as an oral historian for the Totnes Community Archive.

**Joy Slocombe** is Curator of Ilfracombe Museum.

## A YEAR IN THE LIFE OF A NOBLE FAMILY AND HOUSE HOLD— THE FORTESCUES OF FILLEIGH, SPRING 1772-SPRING 1773

Steven Pugsley

Matthew, 2nd Baron Fortescue, attained the not unrespectable age of 53 years in 1772, over twenty years after he had inherited the title from his half-brother and become the head of his house and master of estates that covered parts of Cornwall, Devon, Somerset, Gloucestershire, and Lincolnshire, and included the great palladian mansion of Castle Hill at Filleigh.

It was perhaps a matter of some surprise to his Lordship that he had survived so long. If one theme can be said to course through his many letters and papers in the Fortescue collection at the Devon Record Office, it is that of his perceived ill-health, a matter of grave concern—not to say an obsession—with so many upper-class Georgians. As has been said, medical treatment in the 18th Century was one of the few areas of human requirement in which the élite enjoyed hardly any superiority over the rest of society. Despite the ministrations of the celebrated Dr. Addington, Fortescue was occasionally overwhelmed by illness for weeks on end. He once described his distressing symptoms thus:

'...the whole mass of blood I have too much reason to fear is corrupted and as fast as they can get this from me, by constant horrors and vexation of mind I breed it again so that nothing gives me comfort and every trifle adds to my misery.<sup>1</sup>

That his illness had an aspect of mental disturbance is therefore to be suspected, and this tends to support the assertion of Horace Walpole that Lord Ferrers was a criminal 'literally tried by his peers' for Lords Ravensworth, Talbot and Fortescue were 'at least as mad as he'<sup>2</sup> (there had moreover been an extraordinary story circulating in August 1765 that Fortescue had committed suicide in London and a curious mob had surrounded his town house in consequence).<sup>3</sup> During the year of 1772-3 purging balls figure largely in the extensive apothecaries' bills to Fortescue, as well as a host of other tinctures and spirit medicines.<sup>4</sup> Plunging into a warm bath every morning for about half an hour also appears to have been a remedy with which he experimented, and riding when he was physically able was regarded as a health giving exercise.<sup>5</sup>

The removal of the Fortescue household from London to Castle Hill in August 1771 was not, however, occasioned by his Lordship's indifferent health. In part this was an established annual migration to the country, but also, as he explained to his steward Hilliard, the reduction of his Lincolnshire rental coupled with the expenses of life in town and of his children, meant that for economic reasons he was forced to winter in North Devon;<sup>6</sup> life in London was undoubtedly expensive and, moreover, his house in Wimpole Street could be effectively closed down in his absence whereas his country seat—a major source of status and the nerve centre of his great estates—continued to function in more or less the same manner whether or not Lord Fortescue was in residence.

Thus, from September through to March 1772 Fortescue and his wife Anne were at Castle Hill. Anne, a daughter of John Campbell of Cawdor, seems to have taken some part in the running of the establishment, for she regularly received sums of £20 from Hilliard when at Filleigh, the receipts for which were occasionally endorsed with 'for the use of the house.'<sup>7</sup>

It is difficult to establish precisely how many servants there were at Castle Hill at this time. Certainly, the wages sheets for the outdoor staff indicate that in the week of 21 March 1772, there were five gardeners, ten tradesmen (that is, carpenters and masons) and 36 labourers employed on the farm and estate.<sup>8</sup> Thomas Harris, a typical labourer, spent Saturday 21st drawing wood, was sent on an errand to Barnstaple the following Monday, loaded wood on Tuesday, ditto and ricking wood on Wednesday, and on Thursday and Friday picked out stones for a ditch. For this week's varied work he was paid the sum of six shillings. Three women were employed on the estate, including one to brew malt, and one who worked in the kitchen garden. This number would have risen in the summer when anything up to thirty females, many being relatives of estate labourers, would have been employed for the hay harvest.<sup>9</sup> All were paid by Thomas Crook, the bailiff, who is described on his own record of payment as 'his Lordship's hind.'<sup>10</sup> Whilst he dutifully disbursed the wages at the end of the week his own payment was considerably more sporadic, dues for the preceding three years not being received until 18 July. The list of indoor staff is almost certain to have included a housekeeper, a footman, a laundry maid and a kitchen maid, fed and clothed at their master's expense. They also seem to have been accorded a full share in the attentions of the apothecary, the bill for the servants' pills and potions often nearly equalling that for the family. In the first half of 1773, for example, boluses were liberally distributed, along with purging powders and liniments.<sup>11</sup> Nor were the outdoor workers excluded. The labourer Ben Beer was given a mixture and a linctus in May of that year, and the huntsman both a linctus and a plaster, doubtless to rectify the damage inflicted by a rigorous outdoor life.<sup>12</sup>

The retention of a huntsman is an indication of the pursuits and interests of Lord Fortescue. By and large, though, the surviving written evidence does not credit him with enjoying the more extrovert revels of his class such as gambling or horse racing (unlike his south Devon contemporary John Parker of Saltram). Nor does it appear that his involvement with national politics at Westminster was at all profound. Fortescue was, however, assiduous in his attention to estate affairs, and particularly to the upkeep of Castle Hill House, its gardens and grounds, and to those persons who served him. Shortly before he departed from north Devon for London at the end of March 1772, he signed a lengthy memorandum for repairs and improvements to be carried out in his absence.<sup>13</sup> These included the repair of the stucco and the lime-washing of the house, reslating as necessary, the insertion of a stove grate (which his Lordship undertook to purchase in London) in the Breakfast Room, the said room to be completely redecorated, and the new Bath Stoves to be placed in 'my Lord's Room,' the Canopy Room and the Nursery. In the grounds, in line with the deformatizing taste of the times, he instructed that the hitherto regular pond in front of the house should be serpentine and generally that work in softening the outline of the formal garden, which had been created by his brother and predecessor, should continue. In this he and Hilliard (a trusted advisor and collaborator in such matters) do not seem to have received any professional advice, although his brother-in-law George, Lord Lyttleton had been much occupied in

creating the celebrated park at Hagley, and there are several parallels between the two properties which indicate an exchange of views and ideas. Lyttleton, for instance, had built the Temple of Theseus in 1758; Fortescue followed suit with a temple at Holwell, begun in 1769, an eye-catcher to the south of the house which he desired to be erected in memory of his late brother Hugh, the first Lord, to whom he felt considerably indebted. Unfortunately the expense of erection vastly exceeded the estimates and by 18 April 1772, little more than two weeks after his arrival in London, he was writing to Hilliard at Castle Hill that '...had I not made a beginning to some of the most material things which I left directions for I should most certainly left them alone.'<sup>14</sup> Indeed, the temple was very near completion, but the bills for 1772 make it abundantly clear that instead of costing £100 as had been the initial intention, Lord Fortescue paid in excess of £700 for Holwell Temple.<sup>15</sup> This fact can only have exacerbated his money worries but, as he had commented previously, 'I think the expense should in some measure be made to correspond with the great obligation I owe to my brother's memory.'<sup>16</sup>

In truth, to judge from the information still extant, the estate was being carefully tended by Hilliard. In his responses to his steward's letters, it is clear that Fortescue held Hilliard in a very high regard, usually signing his letters from Wimpole Street 'Your affectionate friend and well wisher.' Hilliard wrote to his absent master with some regularity. In the course of one June week he sent up reports of Devon affairs on the 19th, 22nd and 26th, commenting on the progress of the improvements and on other estate business,<sup>17</sup> to which Fortescue replied at length in July.<sup>18</sup> His Lordship's familiarity with the Devon estate was plainly extensive—witness his note that

'I don't care at present to say anything as to what Johnathan Lawdy's widow desires, you know my sentiments as to that estate—in the first place it was vastly under rented by Johnathan and was it to fall in hand I would only lease that part of it which lies off from the House.'<sup>19</sup>

Fortescue, besides having an intimate knowledge of his acres, was deeply concerned about his tenants and employees—and this may, perhaps, be counted as one of his most endearing traits. In April he had written

'I am very sorry poor Jo the waggoner has been ill, but I hope to hear in your next of him being recovered.'<sup>20</sup>

Even those who had proved unsatisfactory were to be a cause of anxiety:-

'The Coachman does not like Billy and says he can't get on with, so I will pay the poor lad his wages and board wages...(If) the coach horse will at that time be in proper order he may send the lad upon him.'<sup>21</sup>

and

'Ned...is a good lad and rides postilion extremely well. I am determined to take care of him, but he is rather too heavy for a postilion.'<sup>21</sup>

By the end of July it was time for Wimpole Street to be again closed up and the long trek to be made into Devon—probably via Basingstoke, Overton, Andover, Salisbury, Taunton, Wellington and Tiverton, although the route through Bath could possibly have been taken. Road travel, however, was expensive. The turnpike alone from London to Castle Hill in July 1772 cost £2. 5s. 9d.<sup>22</sup> and the expense of sending bulky goods by road would have been exorbitant (quite apart from being excessively time-consuming). When Richard Dade went to Exeter to collect goods with the wagon in August, the whole process to and from Castle Hill took two men

three days and cost £1. 16s. 10d;<sup>23</sup> hence, the stoves mentioned in the list of house improvements were to be shipped from London to Barnstaple along with other stores rather than being carted overland in train with the Fortescue family and the servants.<sup>24</sup> It seems that no detour was made to visit Ebrington, the Fortescue property in Gloucestershire. Indeed, his Lordship's letters to Mould, the parson at Ebrington, indicate that no visit had been made there for some time, although he continued to disburse money for the relief of the Ebrington poor.<sup>25</sup>

Of the Fortescues' six children the three daughters were probably in their parents' company at this time. The three sons were certainly elsewhere. The heir, Hugh, born in 1753, had been educated at Eton and University College, Oxford. In June 1772 he embarked on the first stage of that *sine qua non* for the young aristocrat—a continental expedition, which took the form, as he recorded, of a 'tour through Lisle, Paris, Besancon and other parts.'<sup>26</sup> The general impressions which he set down betray the country gentleman's not unusual interest in agriculture, horseflesh and the military, but he possessed, nonetheless, a sharp eye for other detail. He wrote in his journal:

"The generality of the country flat, sometimes woody, great quantity of corn, flax, no pasture, great many windmills. Frequent on the sides of the roads, crucifixes and images. The churches much like ours...Their horses not good the manner of harnessing them awkward with ropes for traces, the Postillions mostly tall with large boots which they get into with their shoes on, make great noise with their whips, their posts regulated six miles to a post...The streets mostly narrow and no foot place, a mall in every town where the gentry walk sunset till supper. Cloaks worn by the common people like our quakers' habits. The women walk mostly in slippers, except the peasants who frequently walk in large wooden shoes. The beggars very frequent in the roads and towns and often surround the carriage at the different posts. The wine in general light and pleasant to drink, with water at meals, at every place they serve a dessert. Inns mostly good and beds also. No good tea. Coffee houses very frequent. The foot soldiers uniforms white turned up with different colours, except the Swiss and Irish Catholic Regts...The dragoons green...The horse blue. They are all entitled to the Crois de St Louis after they have served 25 years, hanging by a red riband to one of the button holes on the left side. Officers wear no lace except the epolets—difficult to know them from the private men."<sup>27</sup>

As to the attitude of the French, he lamented that,

"The English in general by the bad behaviour of some of our countrymen, not held in so high esteem as immediately after the peace, they were then looked up to and respected even to folly."<sup>27</sup>

(It is worth remarking at this juncture on the frequent entries in the journal 'received £50 of my father,' conceivably justifying Lord Fortescue's complaints about the expense of his family).

Matthew Fortescue, the second son, was put to the navy and little is heard of him during the course of this year. John, the youngest, figures prominently in his father's correspondence, however, and not always to his advantage. Lord Fortescue had originally intended him for the church, but failed to detect sufficient academic ability and therefore sent him 'by his own consent and approbation to an English Merchant'<sup>28</sup> settled in Naples, the brother of a Mr Tierney of Hertfordshire 'a very considerable merchant in the City.'<sup>29</sup> This is a relatively rare example in support of

Voltaire's dictum that 'the younger son of a Peer of the Realm, does not look down on Trade,'<sup>30</sup> for as Lawrence Stone has said, in reality 'the peerage virtually never sent their sons into trade,' and the examples of those who did enter overseas trading companies all occur before 1710.<sup>31</sup> In early Spring 1772 Lord Fortescue received disagreeable news from Naples concerning John's conduct, which aggravated his indifferent health.<sup>32</sup> Things were no better in April for he wrote from Wimpole Street to Mr Hilliard at Castle Hill that

'I have had a letter from my son John and the gentleman he is with at Naples since I came here, and all I have hitherto said has had no sort of effect, I fear his life will be most unhappy to himself and a deep and dreadful blow to his parents.'<sup>33</sup>

Whether for remonstrance or reconciliation, John was expected to be in London in July, as Fortescue wrote to Hilliard that that was the only cause of him being detained in Town.<sup>34</sup> It is unclear if his son actually arrived, but John was unquestionably making the journey to England the following spring when his ship was wrecked off the Sussex coast and he perished with it. Lord Fortescue was en route to London, sojourning in Bath, when news of this disaster reached him on the 4th of March. He wrote at once to Hilliard:

'I just write these few lines to inform you of the melancholy news we received just after our arrival at this place which is no less the loss of my poor son John. The ship he was in was wrecked on the Sussex coast and the Master with almost all of the crew perished among whom was my poor child; you will with my kind compliments at the Parsonage, as well as my wife's, inform my kinsman of our heavy loss; my wife bears this disaster as well as I could have expected.'<sup>35</sup>

It is perhaps a measure of the anxiety that John had caused his parents that when the body was recovered they did not attend the funeral:

'Wimpole St. March ye 16th 1773.

...the body of my late dear child is found, tho not without difficulty. It will be at Castle Hill I suppose next Monday or Tuesday, and young Holloway who attends it will give the proper directions as I would have them proceed immediately to the church without taking out my dear Child's remains. You will take care that everything proper is provided for the undertakers' people, and the horses, they have my permission to stay a whole day at Castle Hill if they chuse it, you will with my kind compliments inform my cousin Hugh Fortescue of what it is necessary for him to know.

Fortescue.<sup>36</sup>

Thus, the period under review ended on a tragic note, and Fortescue lapsed into another period of ill health. Nevertheless, his Lordship survived for over 20 years and the obituary which appeared in the *Gentleman's Magazine* upon his death in 1785 fulsomely highlighted aspects of his character that are well to the fore in the 1772 and 1773 documentation, besides underscoring Fortescue's pivotal position within his family and at the centre of a wider household and estate society:

'This nobleman's character both in public and private, was truly amiable; he had always the interest of his country warm at his heart; as an husband and father, he was affectionate and tender; an indulgent and generous master; though happily raised above feeling want, he had compassion for those who did;



continually employed in discovering fit objects for his bounty, it was his greatest happiness to relieve them...'<sup>37</sup>

## Notes

1. Devon Record Office. 1262M/ E29/ 17. In Fortescue's hand. N.D.
2. *The Letters of Horace Walpole*. ed. Cunningham. Edinburgh 1906. Vol. III. p.299-300.  
Letter to George Montagu. April 19th 1760.
3. *The Letters of Horace Walpole*. ed. Cunningham. Vol IV. p.392.  
Letter to George Montagu. Aug. 23rd. 1765.
4. DRO. 1262M/ FC/ 25. Bills for the apothecaries Gould and Bryan.
5. DRO. 1262M/ E29/ 18. Fortescue to Hilliard. July 3rd, 1772.
6. DRO. 1262M/ E29/ 17. Fortescue to Hilliard. Aug. 15th, 1771.
7. DRO. 1262M/ FC/ 23. Receipts of Anne Fortescue for sums from Hilliard.
8. DRO. 1262M/ E1/ 81. Weekly estate bills.
9. e.g. see DRO 1262M/ E1/ 76. From July 30th to Aug. 6th, 1768, 24 women were employed to help with the hay harvest.
10. DRO. 1262M/ E1/ 12. Household and estate accounts.
11. DRO. 1262M/ FC/ 25. Bills for Gould and Bryan.
12. DRO. 1262M/ FC/ 25. Bills for Gould and Bryan.
13. DRO. 1262M/ E1/ 95. Fortescue: Minutes for repairs and improvements.
14. DRO. 1262M/ E29/ 18. Fortescue to Hilliard. April 18th, 1772.
15. DRO. 1262M/ E1/ 96. Holwell Temple Papers.
16. DRO. 1262M/ E29/ 18. Fortescue to Hilliard. Undated. c. Aug. 1771.
17. DRO. 1262M/ E29/ 18. Noted in Fortescue to Hilliard. July 3rd, 1772.
18. DRO. 1262M/ E29/ 18. Fortescue to Hilliard. July 3rd, 1772.
19. DRO. 1262M/ E29/ 18. Fortescue to Hilliard. July 3rd, 1772.
20. DRO. 1262M/ E29/ 18. Fortescue to Hilliard. April 18th, 1772.
21. DRO. 1262M/ E29/ 18. Fortescue to Hilliard. April 18th, 1772.
22. DRO. 1262M/ E1/ 12. Household accounts. 1772.
23. DRO. 1262M/ E1/ 12. Household accounts. 1772.
24. DRO. 1262M/ E29/18. Fortescue to Hilliard. July 3rd, 1772.
25. DRO. 1262M/ E29/ 18. Fortescue to Mould. March 6th, 1772.  
DRO. 1262M/ E29/ 17. Fortescue to Mould. Feb. 11th, 1769.
26. DRO. 1262M/ FD/ 55. Hugh Fortescue's Travel Journal. 1772.
27. DRO. 1262M/ FD/ 55. Journal. 1772.
28. DRO. 1262M/ E29/ 18. Fortescue to Mould. March 6th, 1772.
29. DRO. 1262M/ E29/ 18. Fortescue to Hilliard. Aug. 15th, 1771.
30. Voltaire: *Letters on England*. Trans. Tancock. Harmondsworth 1980, p.51.
31. Lawrence and Jeanne. F. Stone: *An Open Elite*. Oxford. 1984. p.237.
32. DRO. 1262M/ E29/ 18. Fortescue to Mould. March 6th, 1772.
33. DRO. 1262M/ E29/ 18. Fortescue to Hilliard. April 18th, 1772.
34. DRO. 1262M/ E29/ 18. Fortescue to Hilliard. July 3rd, 1772.
35. DRO. 1262M/ E29/ 18. Fortescue to Hilliard. March 4th, 1773.
36. DRO. 1262M/ E29/ 18. Fortescue to Hilliard. March 16th, 1773.
37. *The Gentleman's Magazine*: July 1785. No.7. Vol I.V. Part II. p.574.

## SOCIAL CONDITIONS IN LOWER STREET, PLYMOUTH IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

W.N. Bryant

The social history of Victorian Plymouth can be greatly enriched by the use of two sources of information which have hitherto been relatively under-exploited. These two sources are: *The Report to the General Board of Health* made by Robert Rawlinson concerning the borough of Plymouth, published in 1853<sup>1</sup>; and the material in the Census Enumerators' Returns. I have used both these sources to illuminate aspects of living conditions in Lower Street, Plymouth. There is an equal amount of similar information for many other streets.

The *Rawlinson Report* tells us that the inhabitants of Lower Street, and of other streets like it, were 'of a poorer class, and congregating together in badly contrived houses, most of which are in a very bad state of repair, and so improperly drained that the effluvia from the drains may be frequently perceived over the whole house'.<sup>2</sup> Writing specifically of Lower Street the *Rawlinson Report* noted that it ran parallel with the water's edge and that the inhabitants were 'mostly of the poorest description'.<sup>3</sup> They also lived in heavily overcrowded properties. From an examination of the Census Enumerators' Returns for 1851, 1861, 1871 and 1881 I have made the following calculations of average numbers of people per house.

	No. of Inhabited Houses	No. of Inhabitants	Average No. of Inhabitants per House	
	1851	29	526	18.14
	1861	23	464	20.17
	1871	23	385	16.74
	1881	20	342	17.10

These figures show that Lower Street was overcrowded even by 19th century standards. The average number of people per house in England in mid century was about 5.5. The average for Plymouth as a whole was just over 9.<sup>4</sup> Clearly therefore the average for Lower Street was exceptionally high, but by no means unique. There were other streets in Plymouth with equally high densities.<sup>5</sup>

Not all the houses in Lower Street were equally overcrowded. The following tables illustrate the wide variations in numbers of people under one roof:

LOWER STREET, 1861			
House No.	No. of Occupants	House No.	No. of Occupants
1	6	7	-
2	6	8	5
3	11	9	12
4	25	10	9
5	8	11	15
6	2	12	8

LOWER STREET, 1861

House No.	No. of Occupants	House No.	No. of Occupants
13	9	24	31
18	10	25	11
19	41	26	15
20	94	27	-
21	60	28	14
22	31	29	17
23	24		

LOWER STREET, 1871

House No.	No. of Occupants	House No.	No. of Occupants
1	9	17	3
2	2	18	13
3	15	19	33
4	10	20	84
6	1	21	56
8	8	22	14
9	8	23	8
12	18	24	24
13	10	25	7
14	10	27	17
15	7	28	24
16	4		

The overcrowding at No. 20 is extraordinary. There were no fewer than 22 households at this address in 1861. Some of those households included boarders and lodgers as well as immediate family. The 1871 Census Enumerators' Returns give a little more information. They describe a part of No. 20 as 'Common Lodging House'. This is the part occupied by Thomas Davey and his wife (Schedule 264). They have fourteen lodgers. There were 19 households at No. 20 in 1871.

The vast majority of the inhabitants of Lower Street in the period 1851-1881 were born in Plymouth or Devon, although there are some interesting exceptions. There is the fascinating case of the Lodging House run by Jane Fewings and her grandson Richard Charley. They seem to have offered accommodation almost exclusively to lodgers who did not originate from Devon or Cornwall. I summarise this entry from the census returns because of its intrinsic interest: (Schedule 257)

26 Lower Street

Name	Age	Occupation	Born
Jane Fewings	Head	Widow	67
Richard Charley	Grandson	Un	26
William Criddle	Boarder	Un	20
William Earl	"	Mar	36
John Wray	"	Un	27
Roger Forbes	"	Un	16
Thomas W. P. Vallely	"	Un	41

Name	Age	Occupation	Born
Thomas Davey	"	Mar	49
Maria Davey	"	Mar	47
James Wilson	"	Mar	43
Mary A. Wilson	"	Mar	31
Noah Meacham	"	Mar	29
Pamilla Meacham	"	Mar	32
William Benney	"	Widr	53
Morris Pigott	"	Un	46

The presence of so many boarders born outside Devon and Cornwall in this Plymouth boarding house is very remarkable. I cannot recall finding similar cases.

*The Raulinson Report* tells us that the average number of rooms per house in Lower Street was 6.<sup>6</sup> Few people therefore would have enjoyed the luxury of a room to themselves. On the contrary, there were many examples of multiple occupancy of single rooms, as the following figures from the *Raulinson Report* bear witness (figures for mid-century).<sup>7</sup>

In 30 instances a single room was providing a home for 2 people
In 12 " " " 3 "
In 18 " " " 4 "
In 10 " " " 5 "
In 12 " " " 6 "
In 1 " " " 14 "

There is similar evidence of overcrowding for other Plymouth streets—Lower Street is one of the worst examples.

These overcrowded houses lacked modern sanitary arrangements. Not a single house contained a bath. Twenty-four of the houses had no drains. None of the houses had a WC, nineteen had 'privies', which were presumably outside toilets. If we assume that the privy was functioning then we must still remember that it might have to serve (in the worst cases) over 50 people, day and night.<sup>8</sup> It is not surprising therefore that there was a high incidence of sickness in Lower Street. *The Raulinson Report* contains a street-by-street analysis of 'Cases of Sickness attended in Charles District from 1 January 1851 to 1 January 1852'. This reveals that in Lower Street there were 100 such cases, the second highest (Moon Street experienced 128 cases).<sup>9</sup> *The Raulinson Report* also tells us how many cases of sickness there were at individual addresses.<sup>10</sup> The worst afflicted was the notorious No. 20. A total of 28 houses—nearly every house in the street—needed a visit or visits from medical officers during the twelve month period. *The Raulinson Report* describes these cases as examples of 'pauper sickness', ie those afflicted were too poor to pay for medical treatment. What is interesting is the fact that by 1851 the local authority was financing from the rates a system of medical provision for the poor, not only in Lower Street but in scores of similarly poverty-stricken streets.

*The Raulinson Report* contains the results of a survey taken on 6 and 7 January 1852 into some of the worst streets in Plymouth.<sup>11</sup> The report on Lower Street stated that, although there had been some improvement since 1847,

'...some parts of it are deplorably bad...and will remain so till the houses are efficiently drained, and the means are afforded to the inhabitants of keeping their places decent and clean; but I believe coercive measures will have to be resorted to. Many houses in this street are in equally as bad a state as Quarry Lane.'

Now, fortunately, there is a graphic report on the state of Quarry Lane. Since Rawlinson is saying that parts of Lower Street resembled conditions in Quarry Lane I reproduce the description of Quarry Lane.

'The Lane itself from one end to the other is in a very beastly state, the receptacle of all kinds of disgusting filth, the houses in many cases worse than common privies, and where privies did exist they were in a loathsome and wretched state,—some choked, others overflowing, others in a dilapidated state; the drains just the same, all choked; and, with the privies, productive of a most intolerable effluvia; the houses crammed full of wretched, beastly, and degraded creatures, swarming with vermin and wallowing in filth. Each room has its family, some two, amounting in some cases to 12 or 14, and 50 or 60 in a house of 4 rooms. In these wretched abodes they wash their clothes and dry them, they eat, drink, they sleep, they cook, and perform all the functions of nature. As may be supposed, the fetid and sickening smell arising from these abodes of wretchedness baffles all description...ventilation they have none, except at the door.'

This information helps to explain why there was so much 'pauper sickness' in Lower Street at this time.

The 1861 Census Enumerators' Returns reveal the existence in Lower Street of a fairly high proportion of widows.

Total number of females aged 16 and over	=	159
Total number of widows	=	36
Percentage of widows	=	22.64%
Nearly one-fifth of the widows are listed as heads of household.		
Total number of heads of household	=	113
Widows listed as heads of household	=	23
Percentage of widows who were household heads	=	19.47%

Rawlinson tells us that the high proportion of widows in Plymouth at this time was a result of the deaths of so many males from the cholera epidemics of 1832 and 1849.

The Census Enumerators' Returns enable us to form an impression of the employment pattern among the poor people of Lower Street. The widows I have just mentioned tended to follow these occupations: charwoman, washerwoman, shopkeeper, staymaker, laundress, canvas worker. The majority were charwomen and laundresses.

The menfolk of Lower Street were doing the following jobs: carpenter, labourer (there were many of these), victualler, stone mason, dairyman, shipwright, cordwainer, shoemaker, sailmaker, trawler fisherman, waterman, farm labourer, rope maker, quarryman, confectioner, bargeman (there were several of these), sawyer, painter, cabinet chair maker, smith, mariner, baker, fitter, polisher, potter, traveller, packer in warehouse, brass founder, black and white smith, tailor, porter, umbrella maker, cooper, brush seller, and mat maker.

The list of occupations is similar for 1871 and 1881. The overwhelming number of these people were poor (Rawlinson called them 'paupers') and in receipt of poor relief and free medical care. But there do seem to have been exceptions. The Census Enumerators' Returns for 1871 tell us that Nicholas Camp, who lived at No. 15, Lower Street, ran a Coal and Coke business. He was also a Chelsea Pensioner (aged 51). This man is clearly not a pauper, but why he chose to dwell in the midst of this jungle of poverty and disease is a mystery.<sup>12</sup>

## Footnotes

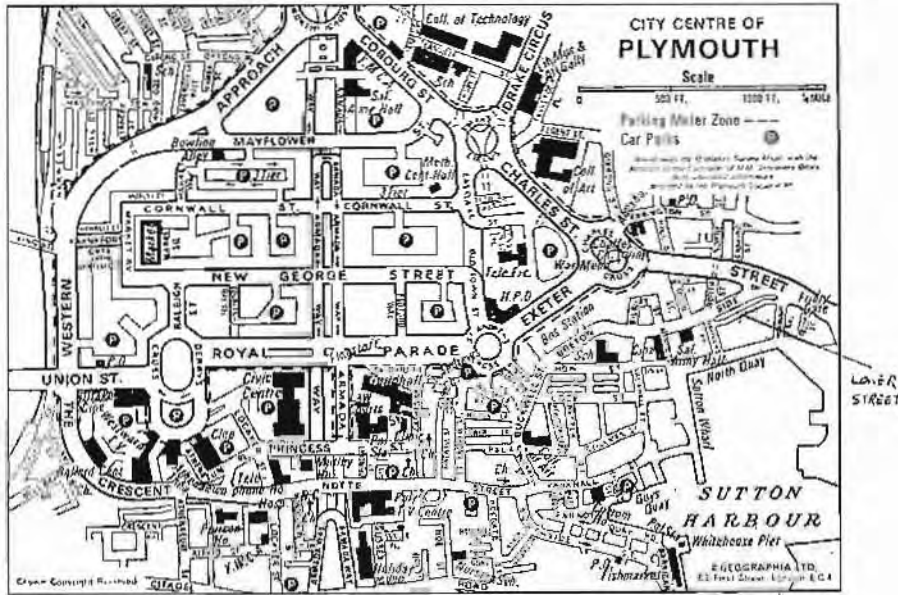
1. Hereafter abbreviated to *Rawlinson Report*.
2. *Rawlinson Report* p.114.
3. *Ibid*.
4. Figures from *Rawlinson Report* pp.32ff.
5. It is interesting to compare these figures with those published by Dyos and Reeder relating to Sultan Street in London. They calculated an average of about nine persons per house in 1871, and fifteen in 1881. H.J. Dyos and Michael Wolff, *The Victorian City Images and Realities* (1973), Volume 1, pp.359-386.
6. *Rawlinson Report* p.164.
7. *Rawlinson Report* pp.164/5.
8. *Ibid*. This material related to mid-century, but may well be valid for the subsequent decade(s).
9. *Rawlinson Report* p.115.
10. *Rawlinson Report* p.116.
11. *Rawlinson Report* pp.82-85. Lower Street, p.85. Quarry Lane, p.82.
12. *Rawlinson Report* tells us that the average width of Lower Street was 12 feet (p.150). It must have resembled a narrow street of Elizabethan times.

In order to help readers to locate Lower Street, I am including the following two maps. The first map (which is modern) clearly places Lower Street in relation to the present City Centre (although it is not actually named by the map-makers). The second map is from the Ordnance Survey Map of c.1860. The maps normally printed in books dealing with Plymouth's history in the nineteenth century do not (in my experience) include Lower Street.

# THE HIGH MOOR RAILWAY

John Dilley

MAP 1



MAP 2



There is no residential property in Lower Street today. The buildings in this area are mainly commercial premises. The most recent edition of *Kelly's Directory* tells us only that in Lower Street there is a building which serves as a warehouse for the Plymouth Co-operative Society. Will it ever again be possible to write a "Social History of Lower Street"?

With the proposed construction of the Bristol & Exeter Railway in 1835 (The Act for which received Royal Assent in May 1836) the way was open for a continuation of it to the fast developing port of Plymouth. The first problem was that of choosing the route it was to follow. Two were suggested: one, preferred by the people of Plymouth, was the coastal or South Hams route; the other, through Crediton and Tavistock, had the support of the people of Exeter. Finance was not forthcoming for either. Then, in 1840, the merchants of Plymouth put forward three alternative schemes. One of these was for a line to Exeter via Yelverton (with a branch line to Tavistock), passing Nun's Cross, Warren House, Chagford, Dunsford, Ide and into Exeter at St Thomas—in other words to go straight across the forbidding wastes of Dartmoor.<sup>1</sup>

Such was the confidence of the early Victorian engineers that a task which, judged by today's standards would be a mammoth feat of engineering, held no fears for them. After all, they argued, one only had to look at the works of Mr Telford and the Brunels to see what could be done.

That the line was never built in no way detracts from the enterprise and skill of the engineers concerned; whilst the final preference was for the coastal route, only basic economics had defeated the project. The purpose of this paper is to describe the route the line would have taken if it had been built in accordance with the deposited plans,<sup>2</sup> and to do so in order that it may be followed with a present-day Ordnance Survey map.

The line was surveyed by Nathaniel Beardmore, an apprentice of James Meadows Rendel of Plymouth.<sup>3</sup> It was described as 'commencing at a certain field near a place called Pennycomequick in the Parish of Stoke Damerall near the Borough of Plymouth; to a certain field in the Parish of St Thomas the Apostle, at, or near, the City and County of Exeter, with a branch therefrom to the Borough of Tavistock, and also certain intended reservoirs, and leat cuts or aqueducts in the Parishes of Lydford, Walkampton, North Bovey and Chagford'. The plans had a complete list of landowners and occupiers annexed.

### The route

The railway was to commence at a point just east of the Plymouth to Saltash road and then follow a line of embankments and cuttings, crossing the Plymouth leat at Egguckland and the Devonport leat at St Budeaux. From there it went through the parish of Tamerton Foliot to the hamlet of Jump, nowadays known as Roborough. At Jump the line crossed the Plymouth and Dartmoor Railway (opened in 1823), then along an embankment and into the first tunnel just west of Hele Wood tin mine. Passing the farms of Upper Town and Leeland it entered a second tunnel under Roborough Down: a cutting through Shubberton Woods followed. At a point about a quarter of a mile south of Yelverton the 'main line' swung away to the south-east, while the proposed branch line to Tavistock continued north up the valley. Continuing on the 'main line', the planned route passed south of Gratton Farm, and

another tin mine north-east of Meavy. A cutting was to be made a hundred yards east of Meavy Church—beyond which was the incline up to the moor.

From Meavy the plan shows the line going east, then north-east, through yet another tunnel, this one under the Plymouth leat, and continuing past Lether Tor Farm (half a mile to the south), through the farmyard at Kingseat to the Plymouth Consols Mine. For the next section it was planned to divert the Devonport leat by about a quarter of a mile. At Wheal Change Mine, railway and leat would share a tunnel (about a mile long) to a point just north of Nun's Cross Farm. From the Whiteworks mine complex nearby the promoters no doubt expected income both from the transport of metal and from the miners working there. From Whiteworks the line would be carried over the notorious Fox Tor Mine on an embankment—optimistically described in the accompanying Survey Book as 'waste land with water therein'. From there the railway followed the Swincombe Brook, bridging the West Dart just below Prince Hall (the present Dartmoor Training Centre). Up to this point most of the land was owned either by Sir Ralph Soper or the Duchy of Cornwall.

The route proposed crossed both the Tavistock to Ashburton and the Princetown to Moretonhampstead roads; the Cherrybrook was to be bridged twice, the second time near Powder Mills Farm. It then crossed back over the Moretonhampstead road, passing within a half-mile of Postbridge, continuing to New House (now Warren House) Inn. Here there was to be a tunnel cut some one and a half miles long—a major engineering feat in that wild country. The line left the high ground, passing between Husson and Vene Farms, to Chagford Bridge and crossed the River Teign near Holy Street. It was to be carried along the river bank, necessitating the cutting of two more tunnels, past Fingle Mill to Clifford Bridge, crossing and re-crossing the river with bridges several times. Turning east to Dunsford, it would then have taken a route to Exeter similar to that adopted by the Teign Valley Railway many years later.

#### *The method of traction*

In planning the railway the surveyors had to take into account the relatively poor pulling power of the steam locomotives then available, and so they incorporated some unique ideas into their scheme.

The first one and half miles of the line from Stoke Damerel to Crownhill (Knackersknowle) was to be operated with a rope or cable as the gradient was 1:33. Power would be provided by two stationary 60hp engines (these were not specified but were probably beam engines). From Crownhill to a spot just beyond Meavy locomotives would be used. For the next stage, the very steep slope up on to Dartmoor, a rope and water-wheel were proposed. This would take the line as far as Whiteworks. To provide sufficient water two large reservoirs were proposed to be built near Princetown. From Whiteworks to the Warren House Inn, the highest point of the railway, locomotives could be operated. The return to low ground to the east was to be achieved in a similar manner to the ascent. From the Warren House Inn another inclined plane, with rope and water-wheel, was proposed. Two more reservoirs would be required, one at the Stats Brook, the other in the East Dart valley. The remainder of the railway to Exeter would be locomotive-hauled.

The use of rope, or cable, haulage was not so unusual then; the system was, and still is, used on many mineral lines. Both the Liverpool to Manchester and the

London to Birmingham railways used cables for the first few miles from their respective termini, because of the gradients involved. (During redevelopment at Euston in the 1960s and 1970s traces of the cable channels were found near the old No. 1 Platform).

The estimated cost of the 'High Moor' railway was put at £770,780, which included the Yelverton to Tavistock branch line: this was claimed to represent a saving of about £1 million on the cost of the 'coastal' route. The Bill was deposited on 29 February 1840. In support capital estimated at £62,000 was raised. However, businessmen in both cities, Exeter in particular, became uncertain as the line crossed too much 'waste land': there were also fears that the mines and quarries along its route would not provide sufficient income to render the project viable. Support drifted away, the South Devon Railway becoming a reality soon afterwards. The High Moors Railway has therefore remained just a 'drawing board dream'—and one of the many railway plans in Devon Record Office.

#### References

- 1 Gregory, R.S. *South Devon Railway*, pp.5-6.
- 2 DRO Plan Ref. DP148
- 3 Perkins, K.S. The 'Puffing Giant' in *Devon Historian No. 30* pp.4-12.

## WHITER THAN WHITE?

Michael G. Dickinson

The making of the South Hams white ale will remain a lost art unless the recipe for the grout which formed its fermenting agent can be recovered. The quality of this was a critical factor in the production of a good or indifferent brew.<sup>1</sup> The addition of eggs and flour must have made the final result something of an advocaat among ales.

Not surprisingly it has attracted a certain reputation, even a mystique. Paul Q. Karkeek's paper read at the meeting of the Devonshire Association at Kingsbridge in the summer of 1877 must remain a classic source for white ale studies.<sup>2</sup> The paper ended on a warning note: 'Such advice (i.e. *Don't*) I also offer to the unwary traveller in the South Hams, who may, by the accomplished native, be tempted to drink white ale. Let me assure him that drinking white ale is...an acquired taste...'<sup>3</sup>

The Reverend Alfred Earle, then Archdeacon of Totnes and later Bishop of Marlborough, on this same occasion composed some off the cuff verses, which were 'discovered' left under a table. Eventually they were published in the *Torquay Directory* more than twenty years later, though still during the period when white ale could be obtained.<sup>4</sup>

'Three spirits condemned to eternal distress  
Compounded, 'tis said, this most horrible mess...'

The verses go on to attribute the invention of white ale to the ghosts of a monthly nurse, a fraudulent brewer, and a chemist, being three favourite aunt Sallys of that period.

Nor does the supernatural parody, the fringe horror association end here. Miss Theo Brown relates the tale of the delirious chairman of a club, who presides over a meeting in his night attire, goes home and dies. After due examination of the sources she traces its origin to a white ale club, held in a cavern in the Plymouth area.<sup>5</sup>

It is true that a brief note written in 1935 is more factual and simply records the demise of white ale at Slapton during the First World War.<sup>6</sup>

Can no witnesses be found to record the moderate and appreciative consumption of white ale?

Another of Karkeek's audience has left a record. Peter Orlando Hutchinson of Sidmouth noted in his diary: 'Kingsbridge, 1877...Thursday August 2nd, Reading Papers. One paper was on *White Ale* and I had some white ale at luncheon. I brought forward my *Scheme for a History of Devonshire*...'<sup>7</sup> After his luncheon, Hutchinson presented a paper which was certainly couched in less formal language than Karkeek's. Far from being incoherent after his white ale, Hutchinson presented the case for the use of both Public and Local records which remains the very foundation of sound local history.<sup>8</sup>

At a more distant period of time we find that during the 1730s and 1740s, a wide variety of produce from the Courtenay estates in the South Hams was brought by water to Powderham Castle. Small coasting vessels even entered the mouth of the river Ken, just below the castle. On at least one occasion there came barrels of white

ale for consumption by members of the household. Dormer Fynes, agent to Sir William Courtenay, later first Viscount, paid 'Mistress Milman for White Ale to Captain Pierce £1. 2s. 0d.' on 6 October 1738.<sup>9</sup>

Disappointingly a search of more likely sources has failed to reveal more about either of the two involved. A Mary Millman, assessed to Land tax at Kingsbridge in 1747 may have been the lady who provided the ale to Captain Pierce.<sup>10</sup>

### Notes

- 1-3 Paul Q. Karkeek, 'White Ale' in *Transactions of the Devonshire Association* 1877. IX, pp.188-196, with the Appendix, pp.196-197.
- 4 A.J. Davy, *Devon and Cornwall Notes and Queries* I pp.133-134.
- 5 Theo Brown, 'The White Ale Club Ghost', *Devon and Cornwall Notes and Queries* XXIX pp.90-91.
- 6 G.M. Doe, 'Living Memories in Devon', *Transactions of the Devonshire Association* LXVII pp.380-381.
- 7 Devon Record Office: P.O. Hutchinson's Diaries.
- 8 P.O. Hutchinson, 'Scheme for a History of Devonshire', *Transactions of the Devonshire Association* IX pp.292-295.
- 9 Devon Record Office: 1508M Devon Account Books V36, folio 167.
- 10 Devon Record Office: Land Tax Assessments, Kingsbridge, 1747.

## ILFRACOMBE MUSEUM

Joy Slocombe

In the late 1920s the idea of establishing a museum in Ilfracombe was gaining support. Three prominent business men, Henry Arthur Copp, Thomas Martin Geen, and John Goodrich Oats, were the pioneers of this venture, and in 1928 Mr. Copp had opened to the public what was described as a 'repository of curiosities' in Northfield Road, but this ceased to function by 1931.

By 1931 the Town Council had considered various sites in which to house exhibits which the Council had received from Ilfracombe people, and eventually, and it was not until May 1932, the disused laundry building attached to the Ilfracombe Hotel was offered to the museum committee. Work commenced on the conversion and Mr M.G. Palmer, F.R.G.S. was appointed curator. An experimental opening was staged on 1 August 1932, of mainly natural history exhibits. On that day it is recorded that 1,231 people visited the museum, admission was free. The official opening did not take place until Wednesday 19 April 1933, when Sir Basil Peto, Bart, M.P. performed the ceremony. The museum floor space at that time was only 900 square feet.

After central heating had been installed in the October of 1933 another 600 square feet was added and the Bird Room was opened. By 1958 a further part of the old laundry building had been brought into use and the building made water tight, and in 1966 the telephone was installed. In 1971 plans were put forward for the trustees to build an extension to the west wing of the Museum, and this now houses all maritime exhibits. In June 1975 the museum was registered as a charity, particular emphasis being placed on the educational side of its activities.

In addition to the many varied objects which we are unable to have on view due to lack of exhibition room, there are some 500 books of reference on all subjects, including a complete set of the *Transactions of the Devonshire Association* from 1862, and bound copies of the *Ilfracombe Chronicle* from 1880 to 1953. There are also 3,000 photographs and prints of various views, buildings, and events in Ilfracombe and district, and many old magic lantern slides and negatives.

The natural history collection, which contains over 200 specimens of wild birds, is the finest collection of north Devon birds in the country. Among the rare species to be seen in the gallery are rough legged buzzards, peregrine falcon, white tailed eagle, and osprey. There are some 1,000 butterflies, both British and foreign, and various sea shore items, together with local fossils.

In addition to the remains of the red petticoat worn by Granny Scott in 1797 and the drum used by Betsy Gammon, and one of the few turret clocks still in working order, some thirty oil and water colour paintings by various artists, depicting Ilfracombe and district from 1796 onwards are on view. A small map section includes a John Speede (1611) map of Devon, an 1809 ordnance survey, and various other 19th century maps of Ilfracombe and district—all originals—together with the Ogilby 1675 and the Donn 1765 reprints. The 1840 Tithe Map of Ilfracombe can be seen on request.

There is a good collection, if small, of pewter (some 40 pieces), china and pottery

(including South American). There are flints, arrowheads, blades and scrapers found at Warkleigh, also flints found at Westward Ho, Baggy Point, Hillsborough and other nearby places all mentioned in Grinsell's *Archaeology of Exmoor*. On show is a brooch made from silver mined at Combe Martin—also a map showing all the mines that existed near Ilfracombe in former times. There are of course many other items from all over the world too numerous to mention.

In 1982 a 40 foot extension was opened to mark the museum's half century and this is used extensively for film and slide shows on various topics, and photographic exhibitions, as well as providing extra space for displaying objects which were in store. Our average number of visitors each year is now over 34,000, and our visiting school parties have doubled.



## JOHN TRADESCANT AND THE PLYMOUTH STRAWBERRY

David J. Hawkings

On 8 November 1627 a man stepped ashore at Plymouth on his return from one of England's least successful campaigns of the Thirty Years War. The man was John Tradescant the elder, and the campaign was the Duke of Buckingham's frustrated blockade of the fortress of St. Martin on the Ile de Rhé.

Tradescant was a gentleman volunteer with Buckingham's forces, but he was principally a traveller, naturalist and gardener. His place and date of birth are not known, but in 1607 he was living in Meopham, Kent and spent the ensuing years embarked on expeditions of various kinds. In 1618 he accompanied Sir Dudley Digges to Archangel, and in 1620 joined Sir Samuel Argall's expedition against the Algerine corsairs. Whatever the principal purpose of these voyages, Tradescant used them to his own advantage in his search for rare plants; and he was able to pursue his interests equally well at home, for by 1625 Buckingham had appointed him his agent, in which rôle he dealt with merchants from the Americas and the Caribbean in search of 'rare beasts, fowls and birds, shells and stones'.

Tradescant was thus a single minded collector of natural curiosities, and it was perhaps with an eye for the unusual that he trod the Plymouth streets in 1627. Naturally he was fascinated to see a woman about to consign some strawberry plants to the compost heap. On enquiring, he was told that the woman's daughter had planted them instead of the common strawberry, but found that the fruit did not come up to expectation. Tradescant rescued the plants (probably a chance hybrid of the wild strawberry), and distributed them to various friends. The story first appeared in 1633 in Thomas Johnson's revised edition of Gerard's *Herball*, where the plant is described as *Fragaria fructu hispida*—the prickly strawberry. Tradescant himself, in his garden list of 1634, named it *Fraga spinosa sive hispida*. The names reflect the curious nature of the plant which resembles the common wild strawberry until it blossoms. Then, the flower is transformed into leafy structures, the petals themselves becoming leaf like. It produces a fleshy red fruit, but in place of the usual pips are tubular leaves, which render the fruit inedible, although attractive to look at. Whether scions of the Plymouth plant have survived is a matter for conjecture, but E.A. Bowles, writing in 1914, stated that specimens in his garden in Enfield, Middlesex, had come from stock originally in the garden of a fellow collector of unusual plants—Canon Ellacombe of Bitton, Gloucestershire. In his book, Bowles offered to send some of his plants to Plymouth 'if the descendants of that good woman's daughter want them'.

Whether examples of this curious plant have returned to the place of their discovery is not known; but it would be fascinating to know whether any of the city's gardens still provide a home for that most inedible of fruit—the Plymouth Strawberry.

### Sources

Bowles, E.A. *My Garden in Spring* Pub. T.C. and E.C. Jack, London 1914. Dictionary of National Biography.

Mrs Rosemary Nicholson, Chairman, The Tradescant Trust—letter dated 26 July 1986.

## REVIEWS

*Security & Defence in South-West England before 1800* ed. Robert Higham. University of Exeter, 1987. 101pp. (Exeter Studies in History No. 19). £2.25. ISBN 0 85989 203 3.

This well produced volume contains the papers read at the initial Symposium of the Centre for South-Western Historical Studies held at Exeter University last November. In the first, 'The Army and the Land in the Roman South West' Valerie Maxfield examines the available evidence of the Roman military presence for the 30 years or so from the mid 40s AD. It is scanty. Legionary centres at Exeter and Gloucester seem certain but other remains suggest briefly used bases for dispersed small units or even transit camps. Some of these, like Tiverton, were rebuilt when later reoccupied for short periods.

Robert Higham's 'Medieval Public and Private Defence' has the benefit of written as well as physical evidence. Governments, whether early British or Saxon with their linear strategic earthworks or Lancastrians or Yorkists with their subsidies for city walls and coastal defences, assumed alike a protective rôle for the Crown. Medieval monarchs also found it desirable to put key royal burghs in the hands of loyal vassals. While some of the castles of the Norman lords may have been originally bases for pacification, almost all became the administrative headquarters of the local magnates. From these castles and the fortified and comfortable manor houses they made their armed sorties against their neighbours and sometimes their sovereigns. Few were sited to meet possible foreign threats.

In 'Elizabethan Militia in the South West' (Harte Lecture 1986) Joyce Youngs considers the difficulties of raising, arming and training an effective citizen force. The men were there, although not always willingly, and the arms were available, not always without complaint from the individuals and parishes who had to foot the bills. What was lacking was the military experience to train around 15,000 raw levies. In the Armada Year Devon was said to have only sixteen 'martial men' and Cornwall four. These were officers, most of whom had their service in Ireland. A Spanish Tercio would have massacred the militia as Spanish regiments did the Prince of Orange's Dutch levies.

Anne Duffin moves on to 'The Defence of Cornwall in the Early Seventeenth Century'. Between 1625 and 1630 England was at war first with France and then with Spain as well. The Cornish coast was open to the Barbary corsairs, so wide that there were times when fishermen feared to put to sea and small ships stayed in harbour. The coastal forts of Pendennis, St Mawes and St Michael's Mount were starved of money and supplies, so much so that soldiers in the former died of malnutrition. A Forced Loan, the size of the militia contribution, pressing men for the Cadiz and Isle de Ré expeditions and compulsory billeting of troops without payment all made for friction with Whitehall. Ship Money was paid without much fuss but with no immediate benefit.

In 'Defence During the Commonwealth and Protectorate' Ivan Roots looks at the external and internal threats to the south-west. The former were not serious, in spite of the war with Spain, and the occupation of the Scillies and Channel Islands removed temptation from the Dutch or anyone else and helped clean the Channel



approaches of pirates and corsairs. On land the government was very much in control and the one attempt at a Royalist rising, Penruddock's, fizzled out for lack of support.

The final paper, by David Starkey, on the relationship between the Navy and the Newfoundland fishery turns on the claim of Pitt and others that it was 'one great nursery of seamen' and so a principal basis of our maritime power. This assertion, strongly advanced by the 'Western Adventurers', was in part responsible for the delay in developing Newfoundland as a colony. In time of war the adventurers did their best to save their men from the fleet and the author contends that it was the Navy that sustained the fishery and not the reverse.

*Adrian Reed*

**A Living from the Sea. Devon's Fishing Industry and its Fishermen** ed. Michael G. Dickinson. (Devon Books, 1987) 87pp., illustrated.

In this anthology we are taken on a guided tour of Devon's coastal communities. Commencing at Plymouth's Sutton Pool we proceed along the South Devon coast, crossing the county to view the Taw and the Torridge, and thence across the Atlantic to the forbidding island of Newfoundland, Devon's 'furthest west'. Our guide, Michael Dickinson, is principally concerned to trace the historic, and continuing, attempts of Devonians to wrest a living from the sea (and the county's rivers) by extracting, processing and selling the various forms of marine life found therein. His topic is thus vast, for Devon's fishermen have exploited the Arctic whale and the estuarine oyster, the Newfoundland cod and the Start Bay crab, the lone fasting salmon and the ravenous mackerel shoal; such enterprise, moreover, has been launched from a variety of locations, from the purpose-built fish quays of Brixham and Plymouth to the open beaches of East Devon, while a host of techniques have been employed to capture the unsuspecting prey. Faced with such an array of endeavour, collectively (and uneasily) termed the 'fishing industry', Mr Dickinson is obliged to concentrate on particular aspects of this predatory business to illustrate his tour. The bulk of his material is extracted from the published work of historians such as Crispin Gill on Sutton Pool, Jeffrey Porter on the Teign Oyster Beds, Conrad Dixon on the Exeter Whale Fishery Company, and Nevill Oswald on the Newfoundland trade, together with Melvin Firestone's anthropological study of the Hallsands community, and Stephen Reynolds' contemporary account of life in late nineteenth-century Sidmouth. Integrated with these secondary sources is a good deal of primary material in the form of documentary evidence, contemporary paintings and diagrams, and maps, both recent and past. Short passages, written by Mr Dickinson, are also provided to link together the various pieces of evidence and illustrative material, adding a good measure of coherence to what might otherwise appear as a collection of oddments.

The net(!) effect of this mixture is highly satisfactory. While some of the secondary extracts and the illustrations will be familiar to many readers, their appearance in a single volume is both useful and interesting. Thus, a number of themes emerge and are sustained throughout the work. The sheer hard work involved in the commercial exploitation of fish is apparent at every turn; the sense

of community fostered by this toil is evident throughout, though especially in the sections on the inshore fisheries of Start Bay and Sidmouth; and the intense competition from rivals at home and abroad, together with the dependence of fishermen on the movement of fish and prices, are persistent reminders that profits from this enterprise are always hard won, and ultimately determined by the uncertain forces of nature and the market.

Mr Dickinson is to be thanked for his guided tour. It contains much of interest and points the way for future research; it is also admirably brisk, with only the coastal OS maps in any way superfluous. The publishers, Devon Books, are also to be congratulated on the design and attractive presentation of the book: though whither notes 7 and 8 of Chapter 5? Lost in the Green Ooze, (p.38) perhaps?

*David Starkey*

**Devon Extracts 1665-1850 Volume 1 Part 1 A to K** by M. Snetzler & R. Hall. Devon Family History Society, 1987 110pp. £3.—available from the North Devon Athenaeum, The Square, Barnstaple, North Devon.

All local and family historians are, almost by definition, parochial in their outlook. Local records are their 'bread and butter' and rarely do they look beyond these—which, considering the richness of 'national' records, is a great pity. The reason for this negligence is, of course, fairly obvious—'national' records tend to be fairly bulky and searches are time-consuming with the results not really justifying the effort.

One such 'national' record is the *London Gazette*, begun in 1665 and still published today this newspaper has been the official organ of the state. As such it has printed many items of great interest to local and family historians not easily found elsewhere. Its sheer bulk, however, must have frightened most searchers off. One who hasn't been is Ralph Hall who has read his way through over 200 years worth of the paper extracting all those entries relating to Devon. His manuscripts have now been edited by Marjorie Snetzler into this booklet.

Covering the years 1665-1850 and the area contained within the Archdeaconry of Barnstaple it reproduces many hundreds of news items whilst over 2000 names appear in the very useful index. The items are arranged in a main alphabetical sequence (Abbotsham, Alverdiscott etc) and on a chronological basis within each parish section.

It is difficult to know what to quote to give the flavour of the whole but typical of the entries is the notice of the dissolution of the partnership in 1818 between Marianne and Jemima Cull who ran a 'Ladies Boarding School' in Appledore. Another typical entry is the announcement of the sale of the 'Coombmartin Mines' in 1781—an early reference to the famous silver mines. One large group of entries concern bankruptcy; one from 1710 reads 'Jeffery Power late of Bideford, Devon, Merchant, Bankrupt To surrender the 19th inst and 6th and 30th October at Lewis Jones's Coffee House in the City of Exon.'

If these three types—dissolution of partnerships, bankruptcy and sales—are the commonest then there are many other more unusual ones. We can read how in 1743 'the Post Boy with the Barnstaple Mail was knock'd off his horse at the end of

Newport, near a mile from Barnstaple,' and how, in 1802, U.S. Doidge of Bideford received a threatening letter (reproduced) warning him not to export food from North Devon. In 1768 the *Seaflower* of Dublin under its master Thomas Power, was wrecked on Saunton Sands whilst in 1815 John Hole of Saunton Court in Braunton had his hay ricks burnt by arsonists—a crime for which a reward of some £210 was offered for the perpetrators.

My only criticism of this booklet would be directed at the illustrations—they don't really add anything to the text being rather general and the reproduction is poor. If the illustrations are poor, however, the text is extremely clear—I understand that Mrs Snetzler actually produced the whole text ready for printing on her own home computer—a real labour of love!

This is the first of a projected series to cover the whole of Devon—if you buy this volume you won't be disappointed and you will be helping to fund the cost of producing the others in the set.

*Peter Christie*

**Uffculme: a Culm Valley Parish.** Gordon A. Payne (ed.), Uffculme Local History Group, 1988. ISBN 0 9513111 0 7. pp.116. £5 post free.

Uffculme's flourishing local history group has gathered together twenty-one contributions from eighteen enthusiasts which advance towards a history of the parish. The book is handsomely produced with attractive plates and typeface. The time periods covered vary from medieval Uffculme to the inter-war years. There are essays on the economic and social structure of the parish, the rise and fall of the wool and cloth trade—in 1799 there were 1,838 sheep to 1,799 people. Surveys of buildings include houses, Bradfield and Grantlands, and the parish church. The latter was restored to high anglican taste, in part perhaps to fight off the Baptists and Unitarians who also flourished in the parish.

In village life drink was central to the pleasures of life and Uffculme had its own Steam Brewery till 1921. Cider too was much in evidence though temperance fought a long battle and won at Victoria's jubilee in 1887 which was celebrated in *tea*. Nevertheless in the 1850s there were eight public houses, 1 per 280 of the population and getting 'slewed' remained in the local dialect to modern times. Other recreations included poaching and cricket. For those who got 'slewed' too often and fell on hard times local charities provided a safety net. Altogether this is an attractive collection of vignettes of parish life.

*J.H. Porter*

**Sail and steam in Salcombe harbour.** Muriel and David Murch and Len Fairweather. Plymouth, Westaway Publications. £3.00 ISBN 0 901474 23 1.

Some time ago Len Fairweather gave a slide presentation to the South West Maritime History Society on a little-known part of our local maritime history. He told with enthusiasm the story of the Salcombe fruit clippers and the men who built

and crewed them, illustrating it with 19th century paintings by 'primitives' from the shores of the Mediterranean. At the time it seemed unlikely that a more permanent record could be made; however, thanks to the efforts of Muriel and David Murch, both experts on maritime affairs, this story has now been published. The cover describes the book as having a 'remarkable collection of photographs'—in this case over 100, all in black and white only. Nevertheless, the book is a good example of what can be achieved on a very limited budget.

*John R. Pike*

**A Tale of Two Rivers** by Rosemary Anne Lauder. Badger Books 1986. 96pp. £3.90. ISBN 0 946290 11 3.

The two rivers whose courses are described here are the Torridge and the Taw. Their sources are wide apart, and their routes differ in character, but both eventually unite to meet the north Devon coast at Instow, from where they flow into that most lovely Bideford/Barnstaple Bay. This is an attractive little book, generously illustrated with no fewer than 145 photographs, including old and modern ones in black and white and some excellent representations in colour. The text is both descriptive and informative on the natural scenes, matters of local historical interest, and up-to-date facts. Some close editing would have been an advantage—the apostrophe and 's' are sometimes misplaced, and the second 's' is omitted from the name of our Society's first President. And a modern map, either instead of or in addition to the section of Donn's (not 'Dunn's') county map of 1765, would have been welcome. But these are minor criticisms of a book that provided evocative pleasure and nostalgia to this reviewer, and, clearly, much enjoyment also to the author in her on-the-ground investigations.

*Helen Harris*

**Down a Cobbled Street** by Sheila Ellis. Badger Books 1987. 64pp. of text and photographs. £3.75. ISBN 0 946290 14 8.

This is a delightful study of the village of Clovelly by Sheila Ellis, who draws on a lifetime of her own experience and on the memories also of numerous past and present inhabitants. The fine collection of photographs with which the work is illustrated were all taken by her father, Paul Ashton Ellis, a noted photographic artist who died in 1965. Some of the many sightseers who flock to this much-visited point on the north Devon coast may leave with the superficial impression that Clovelly is something of a 'set-up' scene (after the style of some modern-day reconstructions), but Sheila Ellis's account demonstrates that the place is genuine, the evolved survival of an estate village with a long and fascinating history, of fishing, lifeboats, and a hard-working close-knit community.

Detracting very slightly from the pleasure of reading this book is the frequent incorrect use of the apostrophe with 's', ('from the 1600's,' 'gifts to the "over-70's"', and 'a little about it's cottages'), which should have been edited out.

Also, if one may here raise a small plea concerning the shape of this and a number of other attractive current publications, it is that they are not always easy to hold in comfort, or to store on bookshelves. This book, a soft-back with wide 'landscape' pages is probably so set to enhance portrayal of photographs, but the point is one which many publishers might note.

*Helen Harris*

**Studies in British Privateering, Trading Enterprise and Seamen's Welfare, 1775-1900.** Ed. Stephen Fisher (Exeter Papers in Economic History No. 17). Exeter University. 1987. ISBN 85989 214 X. £4.50.

This collection of papers read at recent maritime history seminars at Dartington is dedicated to our former chairman, Walter Minchinton, on his retirement and in recognition of his work in inaugurating these meetings.

In the first paper David Starkey considers British privateering efforts against the Dutch in 1780-1783. The prospect of a breach with the Netherlands stimulated a rush for licences, with everyone hoping to intercept Dutch ships before their masters knew that they were at war. Several Cornish ports fitted out privateers for the first time. The market proved in the event to be one in which too many ships chased too few prizes: with individual captures claimed by several ships leading to contests in the Prize Courts. Many of the hastily armed privateers probably went back to normal trade fairly quickly. The number of prizes taken was not large. Counter privateering by the Dutch got under way more slowly: it would have been interesting to have had their figures.

Colin Elliott moves on to the next war with his account of the varying fortunes of the irrepressible Captain Nicholas Toulmin RN. This officer finding himself without employment but with a rich wife applied to the Admiralty to fit out and to command a privateer. He was granted the first but not the second of his requests so he sailed in her as a 'passenger'. His voyage was successful but the indiscreet use of the Navy's private signals cost him his commission. He regained it later but many years afterwards he was prosecuted by the Navy Board on a trumped up charge which he refuted. The author suggests that this persecution and the Admiralty's dislike of privateers was not because the privateers competed with the Fleet for prime hands but for prize money. But perhaps Nelson's view of privateers 'that with few exceptions, they are a disgrace to our country' was also held by those considering the sabbatical employment of commissioned officers.

In her 'Tamar Traffic 1836-1900' Amber Patrick surveys the types, origins and cargoes of the vessels using this river during its short years of commercial prosperity. In spite of her conclusion that the records now available do not allow the true extent of the Tamar's shipping activities to be determined she has provided an excellent study which will satisfy the purpose of most readers.

Stephanie Jones takes the life of the first Earl of Inchcape as an example of 'British Mercantile Enterprise Overseas in the Nineteenth Century'. His field was India where he and his fellow Scots worked hard, invested profitably and by so doing helped develop the local economies: the acceptable face of British capitalism.

'James Silk Buckingham, Sailor, Explorer and Maritime Reformer', the subject of

David Williams' paper, was the instigator and effective business manager of the 1836 Select Committee on Shipwrecks. Although its conclusions were not enacted most of them were given effect over the next few years, leading to improvements in the professional standards of officers, wreck enquiries and the welfare of seamen.

The welfare of seamen is also the subject of the final paper by Alston Kennerley: 'Seamen's Missions and Sailors' Homes'. He traces the move from purely evangelical activities at the beginning of the last century to the provision, after some set-backs, of residential homes in the seaports. Their variety and the attitudes of seamen to them is a fascinating study which throws some interesting sidelights on contemporary attitudes: notably the controversy over the sale of beer in the voluntary supported ones!

*Adrian Reed*

**The Westcountrymen: Ketches and Trows of the Bristol Channel** by Gordon Mote. Badger Books, Bideford. 1986. £3.75. ISBN 0 946290 12 1.

The appreciation of domestic vernacular architecture which developed in the 1920s and 30s was paralleled by a growing interest in the small wooden ships and fishing vessels working out of British ports. By then few of the trading schooners and smacks were still afloat and most of the survivors had acquired auxiliary engines. After the war they too largely disappeared but the men who sailed in them were still around and much useful work has been done in recording their experiences.

Local shipwrights built their vessels to meet the requirements of local trades and owners and so local designs evolved. Mr Mote has examined two of these types: the westcountry trading ketches and the Severn trows. After describing briefly their handling and employment he seeks to list all those built since 1780, first alphabetically, giving port of registry, builder and owners. He then lists separately those built at Appledore, Bideford and Braunton and gives an analysis of the principal building places. The book is well illustrated.

*Adrian Reed*

**The Incredible Armada** by James Mildren. Devon Books 1988. £1.95. ISBN 0 86114 819 3.

This is a brief popular account based on the standard authorities. It is well illustrated, the coloured reproductions being especially clear. If it ensures that Drake's role in the Armada campaign is not devalued that is surely only appropriate in a work published in association with the City of Plymouth. A good buy as prices go nowadays.

*Adrian Reed*

**Discovering Armada Britain** by Colin Elliott. David and Charles. £10.95. ISBN 0 7153 8959 9.

This is a guide book for the shorebound traveller looking for sites connected with the Armada and relics of that enterprise. The author gossips agreeably about the places visited. Necessarily, most of these are in Devon, Cornwall and Dorset. From the southern coastlines of these counties many thousands must have seen the Spanish ships as they sailed and fought their way up Channel.

Mr Elliott is judicious in his separation of Armada fact from legend. The game of bowls on the Hoe could well have happened, while the Drum story seems to have been a late nineteenth century invention. He has an interesting chapter on the organisation of the beacon chain and the safeguards to prevent unauthorized lighting. He inclines to the view that they were fired. It will be interesting to see if any of the numerous Armada writers who have written since are offering any firm evidence on this point. The author concludes with the latest information available to him about the Spanish wrecks on the Scots and Irish coasts and the fates of their survivors.

*Adrian Reed*

**Devon County Magazine** ed. Elizabeth Stanbrook. Brixham. Quay Publications No. 1 Spring 1988. ISSN 0952 875 X, £1.25.

Yet another magazine for the county, intended to be quarterly, with a mixture of historical and current affairs articles; accompanied by many photographs. Historical contributions come from, for example, Judy Chard, Trevor Beer and the editor. The tone of the issue tends to be nostalgic with an emphasis on the quaint and romantic, lots of that in the photographs and ghosts in the text. The articles deal with Bickleigh's history, Hartland, Stokenham, the Lynton and Barnstaple railway and Morwellham. One can but wish any new magazine good fortune.

*J.H. Porter*

**The North Devon Magazine** ed. Rosemary Anne Lauder. Badger Books, 1a North Road, Bideford. £1.25 quarterly.

The first issue of this new publication comprises 72 pages of articles, numerous illustrations and twenty or so pages of advertising. Its aim is to fill an interest gap as far as north Devon is concerned, covering a range of subjects including historic houses, hotels, gardening and countryside subjects. The agricultural journalist Jim Butcher is one of the contributors, with an article on traditional breeds in north Devon.

*Helen Harris*

**Kingston Two Hundred Years Ago** by Helen Mary Petter is a well-researched 12-page pamphlet published by Kingston History Society. ISBN 0 9512277 18. Price 60p. (by post 85p.) it is obtainable from Mrs Darrah, Springfield, Kingston, Kingsbridge.

**Revolt in the West** by John Sturt. Devon Books 1987. £4.95, 100pp., illustrated, paperback.

This is an account of the rising of 1549, sometimes called the Prayer Book Rebellion. Pleasantly written, it tackles what was certainly a lively affair with complex causes, notable among them the burgeoning Reformation and often taken by historians as a test-case for the origins, course and failure of Tudor rebellions generally. Certainly of wide regional interest—if Devon saw the chief events, culminating in the siege of Exeter, Cornwall and Cornishmen, always anxious to know the reason why, were much involved—the revolt also had a national implication, putting central government, already on edge under Edward VI, into near panic and bringing on a cruel revenge emulated somewhat over a century later in Judge Jeffrey's 'campaign in the west' following Monmouth's Rebellion. But John Sturt's reading has stopped short (as the bibliography shows at a glance and the text confirms) of recent scholarship and, quite apart from weaknesses of interpretation, there are egregious errors of fact which gravely reduce the value of his endeavour.

*Ivan Roots*

**Dartmoor Seasons**, text by Elizabeth Prince, photography by John Head. Devon Books in association with Dartmoor National Park Authority, 1987. £12.95, 150pp.

This colourful, 'photographic evocation of Southern England's last great wilderness' is a *vade mecum* for the glove-pocket or the knapsack. There are many snippets of history here, but the emphasis is really upon the appeal of the moor as a tourist attraction, cherished for its wildness now but condemned by the great Elizabethan topographer, William Camden, (cited here) as a 'squalid mountain' and deplored by Robert Herrick (not mentioned), exiled to Dean Prior, for the savagery of its landscape and the 'incivility' of its sparse inhabitants.

*Ivan Roots*

## DEVON CENTENARIES

Compiled by Adrian Reed

JOHN SHEBBEARE (1709-1788). Polemicist and physician. Born in Bideford son of attorney and corn factor. Educated at Exeter School where he 'gave evidence of his future eminence in misanthropy and literature'. Apprenticed to a surgeon, his lampoons on his master and local notables drove him to Bristol where he practised for some years. In 1754 he published his first attacks on the government which led in 1758 to the pillory and three years' imprisonment. Thereafter he accepted a pension of £200 a year and supported the administration.

'The same abusive, base, abandoned thing  
When pilloried as pensioned by a king'.

Nevertheless Boswell thought his knowledge and abilities much above the class of ordinary writers.

VICE-ADMIRAL PETER SHORTLAND (1815-1888). Hydrographer. Joined the Navy through Portsmouth Naval College in 1827. Served as Mate on surveying voyage in Australian waters. Given leave of absence to enter Pembroke College, Cambridge, in 1838. Passed as Seventh Wrangler in 1842 and applied to join course at HMS Excellent with commission as prize for best student. Admiralty decided he would be unfair competitor and gave him his commission without going on course! Employed for rest of his service on surveying work in which he gained an international reputation. Retired in 1870 and was called to Bar in 1873. Wrote on naval law. Died at Plymouth.

## NEWS ITEMS AND NOTICES

THE PLYMOUTH & SOUTH DEVON CO-OP HISTORY PROJECT. This is a programme, funded by the Manpower Services Commission, of Marjon Community Project. The CHP has recently become a corporate member of the Devon History Society. Its co-ordinator, Catherine Radcliffe, writes: 'The Co-op History Project has teams at work in Torquay and Plymouth, researching local social history, with particular emphasis on the development of the small local co-operative societies which were such an important force in the lives of working people before the Second World War. An oral archive has been established and this has proved to be the most exciting facet of the project—oral evidence adds colour and dimension to information gleaned from dusty archival evidence. Between them, the project teams have interviewed many people, the majority of whom were brought up in south Devon and have unique reminiscences of a life long gone. The taped interviews are all transcribed and indexed, and the information is used in conjunction with more conventional sources to fulfil the project brief—that is, to produce exhibitions and resource packs for use in local schools.'

THE OPEN SPACES SOCIETY is urging people to get together to protect and conserve their local commons and village greens, and it has published an action pack giving information and ideas on what can be done. The Society's field officer has pointed out: 'Commons and village greens are a precious part of our countryside. We should cherish them more. With their ancient rights, customs, wildlife and archaeology, they are a unique part of our rural life. For centuries they have provided a place for informal recreation, alongside the exercise of grazing and other rights. Working together, people can ensure that their local common or green is properly cared for. You can form a friends' group to research history, wildlife and archaeology—to help owners and commoners carry out practical conservation work and wardening, and to ward off threats of development.' For further information contact the Open Spaces Society, 25a Bell Street, Henley-on-Thames, Oxon RG9 2BA.

ROADFORD UPDATE. Work on the Roadford Reservoir Archaeological Project in west Devon, as outlined by Simon Timms in *Devon Historian* 36, is proceeding apace. At Hennard Mill the archaeologists from Exeter Museum have uncovered the well preserved remains of the houses and cottages that used to stand around the mill before being deserted over the years. Simon Timms has said: 'The buildings are examples of houses that just do not exist today. Each of the cob and stone buildings has only one small downstairs room with a finely cobbled floor. One has a cattle byre attached to it in the longhouse tradition. The work is already demonstrating the long history of farming in Devon and can be tied in with documentary research also being undertaken'. Living conditions were obviously crowded. One of the earliest documents mentioning Hennard refers to it as a 'village' and nearly 50 people were living there 140 years ago according to census details of the time. Local people remember 21 children setting out from the village for school each day. Several of the

families who lived there had traditional westcountry names like Pengelly, Northey and Smallacombe. The archaeologists are keen to hear from anyone who has information about these families, why they left and where they moved on to.

The impressive finds, which include pottery dating back over 600 years and leather items, are filling the archaeologists with hope that the other farm sites in the valley will reveal an equally long history. Special efforts are being made to chart the changes to the landscape through surveys of hedgerows and the buried soil over the whole valley. 'This is the first opportunity we have ever had to put the history of the countryside under the microscope,' said Mr Timms. 'The Roadford project is now seen as one of national importance with strong support from English Heritage and the Manpower Services Commission. Quite simply we are trying to answer the question: 'How old is Devon?' The investigations form part of the South West Water's package of conservation measures during the construction of Roadford. The 8.120 million gallon reservoir is due for completion next year with the first water available, if required, in 1990.

THE AUTHOR, F.W. WOODWARD OF Citadel, a history of the Royal Citadel, Plymouth, which was reviewed in *Devon Historian* 36, has written to say that his initials were incorrectly given as 'R.F.'. These, as it happens, are the initials of Major Woodward's younger son, who is a journalist with Reuters, so some amused confusion has arisen, within the family if not beyond! We offer apologies for this error.

---

## Exeter University Publications

### EXETER MARITIME STUDIES

#### **SPANISH ARMADA PRISONERS** by Paula Martin

The story of the taking by Sir Francis Drake and his seamen in 1588 of one of the largest of the Spanish warships off the Devon coast, the *Nuestra Señora del Rosario*, and of the wreck of the Spanish hospital ship, the *San Pedro Mayor*, in Hope Cove near Salcombe. Based on original sources in both Spain and England the work reviews for the first time the guarding of the prisoners in and around Dartmouth, their interrogation and disposal of the arms, wine and treasure aboard the two ships. Drake's relations with the Spanish commander, Don Pedro de Valdés, throws new light on England's survival against the might of Spain.

Hardback, c. 120pp., illustrated, £8.25 net, July 1988 0 85989 305 7

#### **LISBON AS A PORT TOWN, THE BRITISH SEAMAN AND OTHER MARITIME THEMES** edited by Stephen Fisher

Contents. Introduction; Prince William's Descent upon Devon 1688: the Environmental Constraints, by John Anderson; Lisbon as a Port Town in the Eighteenth Century, Stephen Fisher; The Crewing of Arctic Whaling Vessels in the Eighteenth Century, by Tony Barrow; Henry Mayhew and the British Seaman, by David M. Williams; Seamen in a Space Economy: International Regional Patterns of Maritime Wages on Sailing Vessels, 1863-1900, by Lewis R. Fischer; The Decline of British Shipbuilding since 1945, by Peter Hilditch.

Paperback, c. 160pp., illustrated, £4.50 net, September 1988 0 85989 313 8

#### **DEVON'S COASTLINE AND COASTAL WATERS. ASPECTS OF MAN'S RELATIONSHIP WITH THE SEA** edited by David J. Starkey

Contents. Introduction; The Marine Cartography of Devon in the Context of South-West England, by William Ravenhill; the Implications of the Tidal Range, by Alan Carr; Climatic Change and the Herring and Pilchard Fisheries of Devon and Cornwall, by Alan Southward, Gerald Boalch and Linda Maddock; Shiphandling in Restricted Waters, by Edmund Eglinton; Handling the Fully-Rigged ship by Peter Allington.

Paperback, c. 160pp., illustrated, £4.50 net, November 1988 0 85989 314 6

A complete list of publications may be obtained from the Publications Clerk, University of Exeter, Reed Hall, Streatham Drive, Exeter EX4 4QR, Tel. Exeter 263066 (afternoons).

---