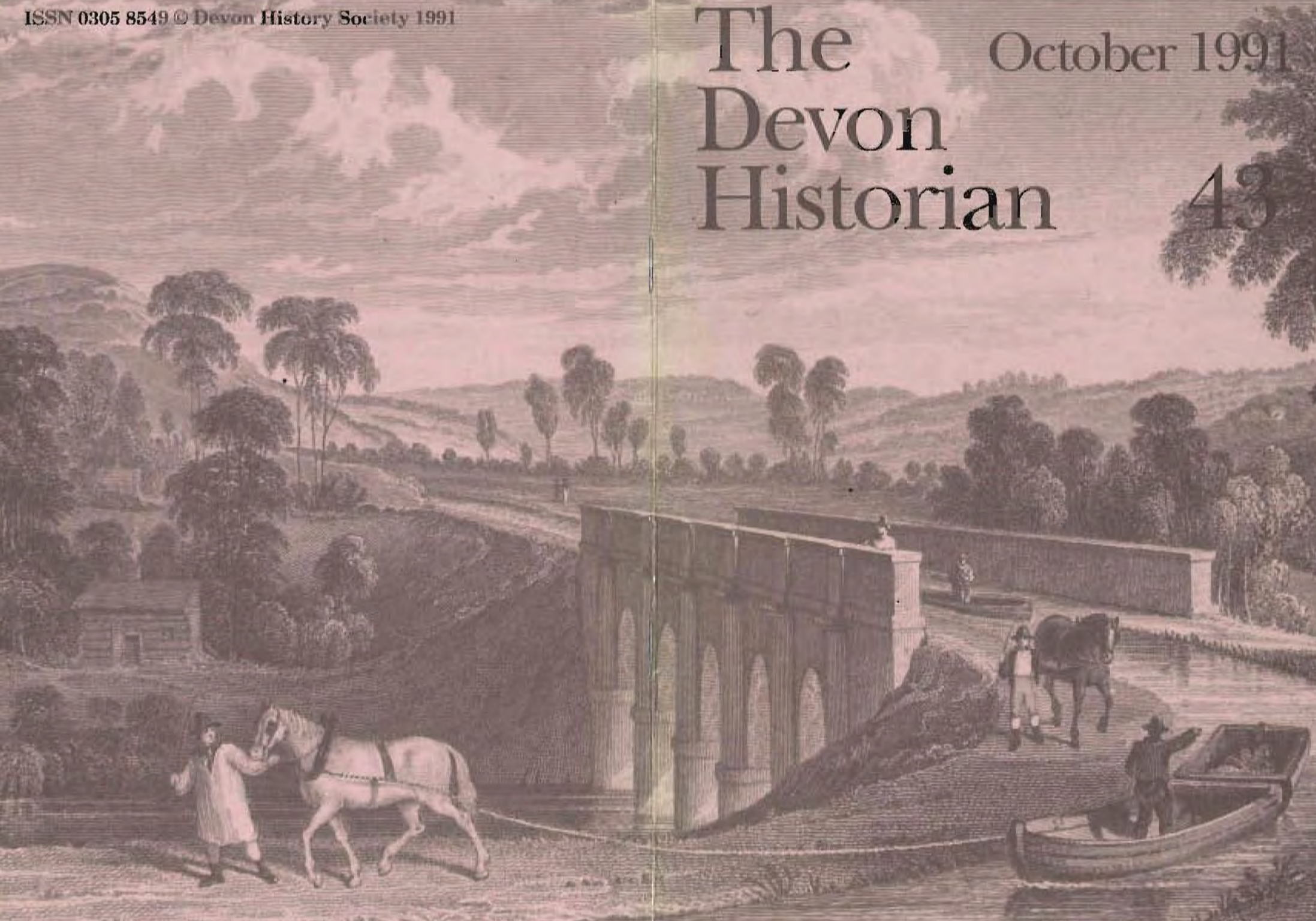


# The Devon Historian

October 1991

43



# DEVON HISTORY SOCIETY

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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*, Hirondelles, 22 Churchill Road, Whitchurch, Tavistock PL19 9BU. The deadline for the next issue is 30 November 1991. Books for review should be sent to Mrs S. Stirling, c/o Devon & Exeter Institution, 7 The Close, Exeter. EX1 1EZ, who will invite the services of a reviewer. It is not the policy of the Society to receive unsolicited reviews.

## DEVON HISTORY SOCIETY AGM

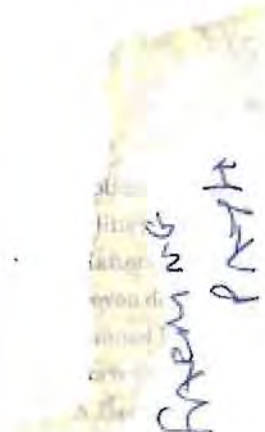
The AGM of the Society will take place in the Seminar Room of the Library, University of Exeter, on Saturday 19 October 1991 from 10.30am - to 4.00pm

The print on the cover is *Torridge Canal & Rolle Aqueduct, near Torrington, Devonshire*, steel engraving by T. Dixon after T. Allom, published by Fisher, 1830. (Somers Cocks no.1135)

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## DEVON HISTORY SOCIETY PUBLICATIONS

Current and back issues of *The Devon Historian* (except for numbers 7, 11, 15, 16 and 23) can be obtained from Mrs S. Stirling, Devon & Exeter Institution, 7 The Close, Exeter EX1 1EZ. (Number 22, which is available, was not a 'normal' issue, but was totally devoted to being our first Bibliography). Copies up to and including No 36 are priced at £1.70, post free, and from No 37 onwards £2.25. Also available post free are *Index to The Devon Historian* (for issues 1-15 70p and 16-30 £1.20), and *Devon Bibliography* (1980 70p, 1981 and 1982 80p each, 1983 and 1984 95p each). Bibliographies for more recent years are available from Devon Library Services.

The Vice-Chairman, Mr John Pike, 82 Hawkins Avenue, Chelston, Torquay TQ2 6ES, would be glad to acquire copies of the out-of-stock numbers of *The Devon Historian* listed above.

## NOTE FOR CONTRIBUTORS

Articles are welcomed by the Hon. Editor to be considered for publication in *The Devon Historian*. Generally the length should not exceed 3,000 words (plus notes and possible illustrations), although much shorter pieces of suitable substance may also be acceptable, as are items of information concerning museums, local societies and particular projects being undertaken.

To assist the work of the Editor and the printers please 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.: 19 October 1991, etc.

## EDITORIAL

After twenty-one years, it may seem unnecessarily obvious to recall that the original aim of the Standing Conference for Devon History (as the Devon History Society was then known) when it was formed in 1970, and of *The Devon Historian*, was to further the study of local history in the county. For many people, local history was at that time a relatively new line of study, and it was felt that guidance on information sources and on facilities available would be helpful to people who might be finding the pursuit a lonely and puzzling occupation. Referring to the formation of the society, its inaugural President, Professor W.G. Hoskins, wrote in issue 1 of *The Devon Historian*: 'it was clear – as so many other counties have found – that there was certainly room for a permanent organisation aimed primarily at giving advice to local historians, and to helping them in various ways.'

Since that time, interest in local history has greatly increased, both as an academic discipline for professional historians, and amongst enthusiastic amateurs. The latter category includes both established residents who have a feeling for investigating in their own county and also in-comers from other areas who put down roots and want to learn about their new environments. Both groups are likely to include people highly qualified in other professional fields who possess enquiring minds and skills that ably equip them for this new interest. Further numbers – both professional and amateur – may be younger, and although these people may have less available spare time, they may, through their work, be in a situation which enables them to offer valuable advice on source works and other matters, as well as – one hopes – reserves of youthful energy!

As parochial and specific subject studies proceed by both the growing number of local history societies and by individuals, it is surely still desirable that the Devon History Society should seek to serve their needs. If it is the wish of members, certain ways will be explored to promote closer co-operation between the DHS and local history societies, all of them centred around the provision for exchange of ideas and information. As an example, it is planned to include a section 'News from Local Societies' in future editions of *The Devon Historian*. (This, of course, depends on the local societies making the Hon. Editor aware of events and work, or information being sought.) Another initiative which is already under way is to encourage in schools an awareness of the Society's existence, and we warmly welcome those schools which have recently joined as corporate members. A further proposal is that a county-wide meeting should be planned which local societies would be invited to attend – to learn, perhaps to display results of local investigations, and to get to know others similarly engaged. Besides providing an opportunity for sociability, such an event could raise the eyes from the purely local level, and enable interchanges of ideas and knowledge that could help in matters of research. Personal encounters could possibly identify likely speakers for local meetings, and contacts for cross-county enquiries.

There will be an opportunity to discuss these proposals at the AGM on 19 October. Please do your best to attend on that day and bring along your ideas. This is your chance to have your say.

## MATTERS OF CONTROVERSY: THE ZERAPHYN OF TORRINGTON

Alison Grant

On 27 December 1587 William Dromant, mayor of Great Torrington, John Predys, J.P., Roger Ley and Roger Browne, aldermen, and others, met in the town's Guildhall to hear depositions from the master, purser, and factors of a north Devon ship. The record of the day's proceedings begins with the words, 'Forasmuch as it is meritorious before the sight of God and man to certify the truth in matters of controversy . . .', indicating that the incident to be described had already given rise to questions. What these were can only be guessed at, for the document gives but one side of a remarkable story.<sup>1</sup>

The evidence, which was given under oath, concerned a voyage made by 'a good ship named the *Zeraphyn* of Torrington of the burden of ninescore tons and upwards, whereof Roger Norwood of the same town is sole owner'. The Torr ridge was not navigable for large craft above Bideford bridge some ten winding river miles downstream from Torrington, but in this period it was not unusual for a vessel to be described as 'of' some inland town if her owner lived there. Torrington, 'flourishing with merchants and men of trade' exported more cloth than Bideford – five times as much in 1565, for example, so it is not surprising that ships were owned there. Typical of these was the 30 ton *Henry* of Torrington, employed in the Cadiz trade by Roger Ley, one of the aldermen at the hearing, who, as a leading merchant, no doubt took an informed interest in the proceedings.<sup>2</sup>

Roger Ley and the other presiding magistrates heard that the *Zeraphyn*, which at 180 tons or more, was anything but typical of north Devon trading vessels, had

made a voyage out of the creek of Appledore within the port of Barnstaple about three years now last past unto a port of Spain named Cales (Cadiz) being laden with Newfoundland fish to the number of fourscore thousands being the goods of the said Roger Norwood, and divers other parcels of cloth and other commodities . . .

The value of the ship and her cargo was put at fifteen hundred pounds, an enormous sum of money for her owner to risk. She duly arrived at Cadiz, where, according to the evidence of Christopher Berryman her master, Nicholas Voisey and Roger Pole the owner's factors, and Robert Whitson purser, they, and the ship's company 'to a full total of thirty and nine', were

arrested and taken for pirates, their bodies imprisoned, and their goods taken away, where they lay in most miserable and extreme calamity and misery by the space of certain days to their great charge and indemnities, and after, by great and earnest suit were put to bail . . . and inforced most unjustly to try their innocency . . .

The Spaniards' suspicions were not surprising, for the *Zeraphyn* was large and probably well-armed, for in those troubled times ships of any size carried cannon, for defence if not attack. A crew less than half the size would have been adequate for a merchant voyage, and although extra men may have been justified for defence, the

Spaniards probably assumed they had been signed on to attack and man prizes home. Intentions, however, are hard to prove, and the witnesses claimed that they had been successful in 'evicting their adversaries by order of law'. The Spaniards, however,

minding not so to let them pass, but purposing more mischief against them, caused suit to be made to the king of Spain, that the said ship with her furniture might be stayed to serve his Majesty in his affairs in the West Indies, upon whose imperial request Commission was granted . . . for the restraint and stay of the said ship named the *Zeraphyn*.

On receipt of the royal commission, the king's officers duly arrested the Torrington vessel, and 'took adand her sails and would have unhangd her rudder if by any means they could have done it'. The witnesses said they had appealed to the king for justice, declaring that they were not his subjects but 'merchants lawfully travelling in merchandise'. They obtained a discharge for the ship after 'long and tedious suits . . . to the utter misspending of all their goods and merchandise, amounting to the sum of £800'. Whether or not this large claim was exaggerated, it is likely that a good deal of money was needed to grease the palms of the officials involved. The witnesses then declared that they had also lost a frigate 'which they might have had for the said ship for England, amounting to the sum of £400 or thereabouts'. Ships could be bought and sold in foreign ports, and the master may simply have been commissioned by the *Zeraphyn's* owner or someone else to purchase a vessel. If this were so it could explain why extra men were shipped. It is interesting, however, that large ships on expeditions of plunder often set out in company with smaller, swifter consorts to sail ahead in search of prizes.

The discharge did not put an end to the matter, for 'the crafty and deceitful Spaniards, minding as well the utter spoil of the ship with the goods and merchandise in the same, as also the men and the sailors therein, arrested them all as heretics and endeavoured by all means to bring them to the Holy House (Inquisition). Fortunately for them, 'one Mr John Fletcher an Englishman born and one of the Holy House', presumably an English Catholic, warned them of what was intended, whereupon they,

secretly for safeguard of their lives, with great travail and expenses, procured unto themselves sails, and in the night did set sail and stole away out of the said port of Cales . . . and after many and sundry perils and dangers passed, arrived here in England joyful of their lives though sorrowful of the losses of the goods and merchandise of the said Roger Norwood.

The *Zeraphyn's* arrest probably occurred under Philip II's order for the 'stay' of all English ships then in Spanish harbours, in retaliation for piratical attacks on Spanish commerce. According to the evidence given at Torrington in December 1587, she had sailed 'about' three years earlier, so the chances are that she was still in Cadiz when the order was made in May 1585.<sup>3</sup> England's reply was to 'legalise' subsequent piracy by licensing shipowners and merchants to set out privateers to attack Spanish shipping by way of reprisal. In view of the losses he claimed, Norwood should have easily obtained a licence for the *Zeraphyn*, but the enquiry suggests that the authorities wanted to know more about her voyage to Cadiz, and her owner's intentions.

Roger Norwood was not a regular trader, for his name does not occur in Barnstaple

port books of the period, and those for 1584 and '85, one of which should have shown the departure of the *Zeraphyn* with her cargo for Cadiz, do not survive. There is room for doubt about this cargo, for 80,000 fish could be loaded in a vessel of 20 or 25 tons, and it would have taken six month's export of cloth from north Devon to fill the *Zeraphyn's* remaining hold space!<sup>4</sup> It is not likely that merchants in regular trade would have sold much cloth to Norwood, so his ship probably carried only a modest amount. Although 'other commodities' were mentioned, port books show no significant market in Spain for goods legally exported from north Devon, other than cloth and dried fish. It therefore appears that the *Zeraphyn* was a suspiciously large 'merchant' ship, suspiciously underladen with merchandise. As far as small west-country ports were concerned, large well-armed, well-manned ships in sole ownership at this time, apart from some in the Newfoundland fishery, were usually bought or built for one purpose – piracy, whether or not 'legalised' as privateering, so the Spaniards may not have been far out in their suspicions. If they were wrong, however, what other game might her owner have been up to?

If Roger Norwood was indeed the sole owner of the *Zeraphyn* and her cargo, he was not short of money. His wealth did not originate in land or legal trade, however, for in the 1570s he had been a customs official in the port of Barnstaple, a 'searcher' who not only neglected to search, but aided and abetted merchants who broke the law by shipping out corn to Spain at a time when its export was illegal without a licence. These shipments apparently continued year after year, and were so profitable that Norwood and another officer went into partnership to buy up quantities of grain which they stored in a large barn on the cliffs at Hartland, to sell to ships anchored outside the bar, thus avoiding the legal quays. It is not surprising that the port of Barnstaple was noted for dishonest practices at this time; a visiting merchant remarked that nothing but prohibited wares passed in and out!<sup>5</sup>

Even when the illegal 'passing of grain' came to light little action seems to have been taken, for north Devonians then, as later, appear to have regarded smuggling as a right. Even the nobility were upset when the government took action, which suggests that as landowners they were in the racket too. Merchants who finally had to 'confess' their ships should have forfeited them, but bribery, intimidation, or influential friends probably ensured that they lost little, for ships and offenders alike were soon back in trade.<sup>6</sup> Norwood, who presumably lost his job, emerged as a rich shipowner, possibly with the aid of some of his partners in crime, who may even have encouraged him to acquire a large ship with a view to the illegal export of more grain in exchange for Spanish gold. The *Zeraphyn* could certainly have run a heavy cargo like grain, perhaps with more speed and secrecy than a number of small vessels. In this connection it may be significant that she had two factors on board. Norwood obviously did not have his own resident factor in Cadiz as regular north Devon merchants did, but it would surely have been cheaper to hire the services of one of those experienced agents to dispose of a small amount of cloth and a few fish.<sup>7</sup> Norwood, however, may have wanted to conceal the nature of 'other commodities' on board. There is, of course, no proof that he defrauded the customs on this occasion, but with his record he would certainly have been capable of doing so!

Whatever suspicions occasioned the enquiry at Torrington in 1587 could have been totally unfounded, but the *Zeraphyn's* subsequent record was not exactly whiter than white. She 'sustained injuries . . . from the French ship of war called the *Grand Bryseck* . . .', which probably meant she had been caught attacking or lying in wait for

French merchant ships, and got the worst of the encounter. At this time an increasing number of English privateers were attacking not only Spanish ships but those of other nations, on the scantiest of pretexts or none, and Roger Norwood had probably sent the *Zeraphyn* to join the free-for-all. If so he was committing piracy, for he applied for a privateering licence *after* the event, when he petitioned the Privy Council for 'letters to make stay of some Frenchmen's goods, or letters of licence to be revenged as I may'.<sup>8</sup> There is no record that he was ever granted such a licence either in response to this application, made in 1587, or on account of his losses at Cadiz.

The next year the *Zeraphyn* was 'pressed' by the Lord Admiral for service against the Armada, but whether she played any part is doubtful, for at the end of July, when the campaign was almost over, a letter from the Privy Council informed the Lord Lieutenant of Devon that 'one Norwood is said not to have sustained no charge at all towards the setting forth of the said ship'. Later, however, the Council proclaimed itself satisfied that the ship had been 'employed with Her Majesty's navy in the late service at the seas', and that her owner, having 'disbursed the whole charge of victualling his said ship' was to be reimbursed from a tax to be levied on local towns and villages. In view of the difficulties of raising any kind of levy in north Devon, it is unlikely that he ever received the money he claimed, – but as none of the many lists compiled of ships that served in any capacity against the Armada mention the *Zeraphyn* of Torrington, it looks as if she either arrived too late or was not even sent.<sup>9</sup>

By the end of this correspondence the *Zeraphyn's* owner was recorded as George Norwood, so Roger may have passed on, or made himself scarce for some reason. His name is found no more in the surviving records, and the *Zeraphyn* too slips away beyond the horizon leaving behind many unanswered questions, and the strong suspicion that her career had been anything but 'zeraphic'!

## NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. Devon Record Office, Z16/13/14. I am grateful to Susan Scrutton of the Torrington History Society for drawing my attention to this document. It will be clear where it has been used in the rest of the article, so no further reference will be made to it.
2. T. Risdon, *Survey of the County of Devon* (1811, rpt. Barnstaple, 1970), 272; Public Record Office (hereafter PRO), E190.925/1, 925/10, 933/1, Exchequer Queen's Remembrancer Port Books, Barnstaple 1565-6, and 1581-82.
3. K.R. Andrews, *Trade, Plunder and Settlement* (Cambridge, 1984), 223.
4. The capacity of vessels can be roughly estimated from port book records. PRO, E190.937/8 (Dartmouth, 1599-1600) shows a vessel of 18 tons loading 70,000 fish, and a 40 tonner 150 kerseys. PRO, E190.933/1 shows the total north Devon export of cloth in the 6 months Michaelmas 1581 - Easter 1582 (admittedly a time when the export trade was depressed) as 192 kerseys, 66 pieces of bayes, 30 pieces of frieze, and 300 ells of Wedmore cloth, which could probably have all been stowed in one large vessel with room to spare. The *Zeraphyn* was over 180 tons – one record (see no. 8 below) says 200.
5. N. Williams, *Contraband Cargoes* (1959) 51.
6. *Historical Manuscripts Commission Reports*, 9, Salisbury XIII, 136; PRO, E190.933/1 shows that 'confessed' ships and merchants were trading again; *Acts of the Privy Council* (hereafter APC), 1591-2, 490, shows the attitude of north Devon

## SAMUEL BROWN'S PLAN TO BRIDGE THE TAMAR

Keith S. Perkins

Robert Stevenson (1772-1850), in his article *Descriptions of Bridges of Suspension* (1821), describes the *Union Chain Bridge* built over the River Tweed near Berwick in 1820 by Captain Samuel Brown RN, (1776-1852) as being 'the first bridge of suspension erected in Great Britain, calculated for the passage of loaded carriages'.<sup>1</sup> An artist's impression of the bridge by Alexander Nasmyth<sup>2</sup> (*before erection*) is now in the possession of the Royal Society of Arts. Robert Stevenson attended the opening ceremony of the bridge on 26 July 1820.

The Earl of Morley, whose property at Saltram in South Devon formed the southern bank of the Laira, was so impressed by accounts of the Tweed Bridge that, in September 1822, he engaged the services of the young Plymouth civil engineer James Meadows Rendel (1799-1856) to design such a bridge for him – privately – to cross the Plym estuary at Laira.<sup>3</sup> Rendel had, by chance, about 1817 assisted Thomas Telford (1757-1834) and possibly Captain Brown in a joint scheme towards the erection of a suspension bridge across the River Mersey at Runcorn. Despite the unanimous acceptance of the design by the bridge committee, nothing came of the Runcorn proposal.<sup>4</sup> Telford and Brown went their own ways; whilst Rendel, early in 1822, left Telford's employ to set up his own civil engineering practice in Plymouth. He wrote:

'In September 1822, having projected a bridge of suspension across the Tamar at Saltash, I waited on the Earl of Morley to solicit his support. With that quickness, which in all matters of business characterizes his Lordship, he suggested the application of the principle to a bridge over the Lary, and directed me to turn my attention to a design for that purpose.'<sup>5</sup>

A committee of eminent practical and civil engineers, led by Marc Isambard Brunel, approved Rendel's design, but early in 1823, Rendel faced, through Morley, an irate Captain Brown, who claimed that Rendel had made 'an exact transcription of his plan' (for his *Union Chain Bridge*). It is the opinion of C.E. Welch<sup>6</sup> that Brown had hoped to be the engineer at Laira. No doubt bitter and shocked, Rendel retaliated in a letter to Morley:

'I conceive it will be quite unnecessary for me to remark that Captain Brown wishes to grasp at everything in the shape of suspension bridges and therefore of course feels sore at the idea of one being built without him. It appears to me that Captain Brown, in the heat of the moment, forgot himself . . . ; (however), a direct answer to Captain Brown's charges of my having copied his patent specification, I must flatly contradict him . . .'<sup>7</sup>

Rendel's involvement at Laira though, effectively removed him from the Tamar scene; where the aspirations of 'Noblemen, Gentlemen and Landed proprietors in adjacent parts of Devon and Cornwall' – who were equally inspired by accounts of the *Union Chain Bridge* – were amplified by a unanimous desire to see a similar structure erected over the River Tamar at Saltash. During early 1823, Captain Brown – who

merchants to action by customs officers – one merchant and his 'complices' riotously breaking down warehouses and removing confiscated goods!

7. West Country Studies Library, Moger Wills, Will of William Andrew, 1578. factor in Cadiz for William Ley of Torrington. The son of a Bideford merchant, the testator mention 3 other Englishmen living there, of whom 2 bore the names of north Devon merchant families (Dennis and Wescombe).
8. *Calendar of State Papers, Domestic, 1581-90*, 449.
9. APC, XVI, 201; J.J. Alexander and W.R. Hooper, *The History of Great Torrington* (Sutton, 1948), 126-27.

## DEVON DEATH CENTENARY

Sir Richard Grenville (1542-1591). Soldier and colonizer. Son of Roger Grenville, a captain of the *Mary Rose* and lost with that ship. Birthplace uncertain but more likely to have been in Cornwall than in Devon but later had close associations with Bideford. Admitted Inner Temple 1559, MP 1563, served in Hungary 1567/8. Interested in Munster Plantation with Raleigh, in scheme for S. American settlement and in privateering. Led expeditions to Virginia in 1585 and 1586 and would have sailed again in 1588 but ships diverted against Armada. Served at home during that campaign and once more developed Irish land interests. In 1591 appointed Vice Admiral of squadron under Lord Thomas Howard, sent to intercept treasure fleet but which was itself surprised by a superior Spanish force. In circumstances never clearly established but variously attributed to lack of nautical knowledge, pig headedness or false sense of honour on his part, the *Revenge*, his flagship, failed to follow the rest of the squadron in weathering the Spanish fleet. Instead she fought a 15 hour engagement with it but while inflicting damage on the enemy and creating a patriotic legend she nevertheless became the only English battleship to surrender in the Spanish War. Grenville died of wounds shortly after the action.

ADRIAN REED

was currently engaged in the construction of the Brighton Chain Pier – was also engaged in surveying the Tamar. A plan of a suspension bridge (of course) was the outcome and, on 22 April the 'ever active' Henry Woolcombe – founder and long serving President of the Plymouth Institution, and now acting on behalf of a committee of projectors – prepared (according to his diary) to journey to London, specifically to discuss the Saltash Chain Suspension Bridge proposal with Captain Brown. Subsequently the Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty approved the project. At New Inn, Callington, on Monday 4 August – with Charles Trelawney, High Sheriff of Cornwall in the chair and with the High Sheriff of Devonshire also in attendance – the plan and estimates were presented to a 'numerous and respectable meeting' and a letter from Samuel Brown was read out to the meeting by Henry Woolcombe. Brown explained that:

'From the experiments which I have made on the tenacity of wrought iron bolts united in the manner of the Union Bridge, in every degree of curvature and variation of form which the design is capable of, I am perfectly satisfied of the practicability of erecting a similar work at the above mentioned site, without any central support, and sufficiently commodious and secure for the transit of all descriptions of carriages, without any limitation as to weight and number; and at the same time be sufficiently elevated above high water spring tides, so as to leave the whole breadth of the river free for the navigation as at present, and height for a first-rate in ordinary to pass under, with her masts in ...'

As well as estimating the expense of the work at £51,500; Samuel Brown concluded by saying that: 'I see my way sufficiently clear to undertake the completion of it for the sum stated'; a sum later increased by Woolcombe to £60,000 because of other expenses. For instance: the cost of an Act of Parliament, the purchase of land etc.<sup>8</sup>

Resolutions in favour of a suspension bridge were passed at the meeting, and these were forwarded by Henry Woolcombe to Sir William Knighton, Bart., Member of the Council and Auditor to the Duchy of Cornwall. The communication was acknowledged before onward transmission to the Surveyor General for evaluation; and, subsequent consideration by His Majesty King George IV.<sup>9</sup>

Various meetings, both in Devonshire and Cornwall took place during the latter weeks of 1823, sometimes with the Earl of Morley in the chair. These were mainly to do with applications to His Majesty's Government to obtain loans. By 5 December, subscriptions taken locally had amounted to 'upwards' of £10,000. Three months later though, on 2 March 1824, Woolcombe found it necessary to correspond again with Sir William Knighton to stimulate, what may have appeared to him, less than certain progress in the matter. He wrote:

'... the success of a great public work, viz the erection of a bridge across the Tamar at Saltash remains suspended, and the execution of it mainly depends upon the presentation of a Memorial from the Duchy of Cornwall to the Lords of the Treasury, confirmatory of the report of the Surveyor General that the erection of a bridge at this place will be of great benefit to the Duchy lands –'

Woolcombe pointed out that a Memorial from the projectors had already been placed before the Lords of the Treasury but he did not want any answer upon that Memorial until the Memorial from the Duchy was also before their Lordships! He continued:

## BRIDGE ACROSS THE TAMAR.

*THE Public are hereby respectfully informed that a Meeting will be held on WEDNESDAY, the SEVENTH day of APRIL next, at ELLIOTT'S ROYAL HOTEL, in the Town of Devonport, at Ten o'clock in the morning, for the purpose of taking into consideration the Plan and Estimates that will be then laid before the Meeting, for erecting*

### A Bridge across the Tamar,

*and, if it should be thought expedient, to proceed to the appointment of a Committee of Gentlemen, who shall be authorized to confer with His Majesty's Government and all persons interested, and to take such preliminary steps for executing a plan to carry out a design into execution.*

*The Importance of a safe, certain, and expeditious communication between the County of Cornwall and the Towns of Plymouth, Devonport, and Stonehouse, is so obvious as to require no statement; and it is unreasonable, that neither the eastern parts of that County nor the other Towns can obtain the degree of prosperity of which they are susceptible without such a communication.*

WILLIAM CALL,	J. T. COBYTON,
EDW. J. CLARKE,	FRANCIS H. RODD,
J. A. FLETCHER,	EDWARD ARCHER,
RICHARD DODGE,	WM. H. HORNBY,
PETER GLOBE,	J. F. FLETCHER,
HENRY WOOLCOMBE,	HENRY WOOLCOMBE,
of Plymouth,	of Plymouth.

*Plymouth, 22nd March, 1830.*

*Top: Handbill, 22 March 1830 – Archives, Duchy of Cornwall.*

*Centre: Artists impression of the proposed Saltash Chain Suspension Bridge, 1823 – Archives, Duchy of Cornwall.*

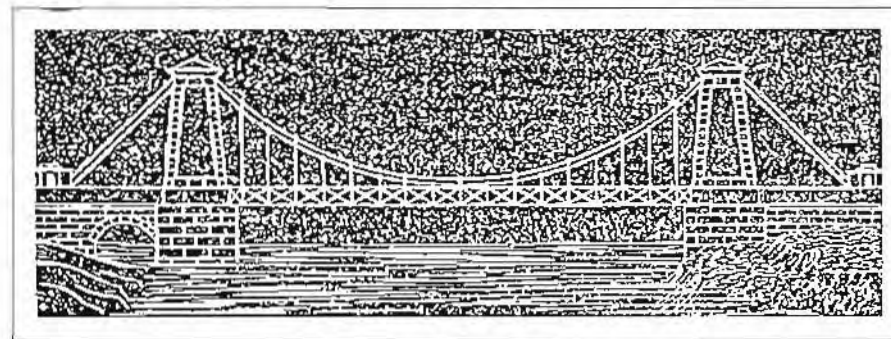
*Dimensions: Total length of carriage way, greater than 1200 feet.*

*Span: from points of suspension, 850 feet.*

*Breadth: 24 feet*

*Height: above High Water Mark, 90 feet.*

*Bottom: Montrose Suspension Bridge as published in the Montrose Review 26 March 1830.*



'The difficulty to be surmounted with the Treasury is, their requiring private security for the repayment of the loan of £40,000 in aid of the sum required to effect this work; instead of accepting the tolls on the bridge, as a security for the payment of the money which the Treasury may authorize to be advanced, and which in objects of less *general* interest has been acceded to in the two instances, namely, the Dartmoor Rail road, and the Bude canal. The inhabitants of the neighbourhood are much impressed with an idea, that if the subject could be brought under His Majesty's consideration, that the welfare of the inhabitants of Cornwall and Devon, and the erection of a work calculated to raise the scientific character of the Nation, would interest the royal mind; but aware of the impropriety of such an intrusion they do not venture to make it.'

Henry Woolcombe concluded with the hopes that a board could be raised for considering the report of the Surveyor General, and coming to a 'determination', whether a Memorial shall be presented on the subject to the Treasury . . . he pressed for such a meeting, on behalf of all interested parties.<sup>10</sup>

Thoughts of ever being successful in their endeavours must have been a constant worry to Henry Woolcombe and the bridge committee, for in all seven years were to pass before, on 22 March 1830, a last effort to succeed took the form of a handbill, and newspaper advertisements, informing the general public that:

' . . . a meeting will be held on WEDNESDAY, the SEVENTH day of APRIL next, at ELLIOTT'S ROYAL HOTEL, in the Town of Devonport, at Twelve at noon, for the purpose of taking into consideration the Plan and Estimate that will be then laid before the Meeting, for erecting A bridge across the Tamar . . .'<sup>11</sup>

Alas! The die had already been cast when, on 19 March -- just FOUR days *before* the announcement of the meeting at Elliott's, Captain Samuel Brown's newly completed suspension bridge over the South Esk River at Montrose in Scotland partially collapsed during a boat-race. As 700 people on the bridge rushed from one side to the other, there was a loud report as the top, main chain -- on the east side -- snapped at the northern point of suspension! Many spectators were crushed and there was a serious loss of life. By 26 March (just seven days later), Samuel Brown had arrived back in Montrose to investigate the tragedy.<sup>12</sup> The Lords of the Treasury, and not least the Duchy of Cornwall, almost certainly would have been influenced by the Montrose calamity in their consideration of the Saltash Chain Bridge proposal. And, as it turned out, the Tamar did *not* get its road suspension bridge at Saltash until 1961, more than 130 years later!

Our story is not quite complete: Rendel -- having finished the construction of a cast-iron bridge at Laira in 1827 (not a suspension bridge as was intended originally) was, between 1829-1831, engaged in -- amongst other things -- the development and introduction of the Steam and Chain Floating Bridge, a comparatively cheap but safe mode of communication over the River Dart at Dartmouth.<sup>13</sup> The project was not lost to the imagination of the Saltash Bridge Committee who, having lost out on the bridge scheme, now studied the initial success of this novel craft -- capable of transporting vehicles in 'roll on, roll off' fashion, as well as pedestrian traffic -- when first it came into service on 19 August 1831. Three months later, on 25 November, the committee chairman -- J.T. Coryton -- communicated through Henry Woolcombe with officers of

the Duchy of Cornwall informing them that it is now the intention of a Company of Noblemen, Gentlemen and Landed proprietors . . . to apply to Parliament in the ensuing session, for leave to bring in a Bill to establish such a Floating Bridge at Saltash.<sup>14</sup> In the event, the Saltash Floating Bridge, designed by J.M. Rendel in 1831 and built by John Pope at Turnchapel in 1832, was established across the Tamar in February 1833 . . . But therein lies another story.

#### Footnotes:

1. The Union Chain Bridge, built by Captain Samuel Brown in 1820, on behalf of the Berwick and North Durham Turnpike Trust, is now an Ancient Monument maintained in a serviceable state by the Tweed Bridges Trust, Northumberland.
2. Sir Samuel Brown (knighted in 1838) was responsible for greatly improving the manufacture of Chain Cables for the Royal Navy and the Merchant Service, and for designs for suspension bridges. The Montrose disasters and others of similar nature serve to remind us that real success is never achieved easily -- a sad reflection on Samuel Brown, who died at Blackheath in 1852. Ironically, the Montrose Suspension Bridge was eventually restored by Plymouth civil engineer James Meadows Rendel. It survived until 1930 when it was demolished.

#### Notes, Sources and Acknowledgements

1. Stevenson, Robert, *Description of Bridges of Suspension*, Edinburgh Philosophical Journal Vol 5 (1821). Stevenson designed and built the Bell Rock Lighthouse 1807-1811. He also was the grandfather of Robert Louis Stevenson the celebrated novelist.
2. As well as being a landscape artist of some note, Alexander Nasmyth was also an accomplished portrait painter. His portrait of the poet, Robbie Burns, now in the National Gallery, Edinburgh, is described as the most authentic (see *Dictionary of National Biography*, Robert Burns). Alexander's son James, originated the system upon which James Meadows Rendel based his floating bridges at Dartmouth, Saltash, Torpoint and elsewhere. James Nasmyth also invented the steam hammer, and its application as pile driver. Both were adopted at Devonport dockyard: See Samuel Smiles ed -- *James Nasmyth, An Autobiography* 1885.
3. Welch, C.E. M.A., 'The iron bridge at Plymouth', *Transactions of the Devonshire Association*, vol 98 1966 p.370.
4. Hopkins, H.J. *A Span of Bridges*, 1970 p.186.
5. Rendel, J.M. 'The iron bridge at Plymouth, 1830', *Transactions Plymouth Athenaeum* I.
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7. Morley Papers Acc 69 -- DRO (West). Letter, Rendel to Morley, 6/2/1823.
8. 'Saltash Chain Suspension Bridge' -- *Western Luminary* 12 August 1823 -- *West Briton* 22 August 1823 -- Prospectus 1823, DRO (West) 1249/1.
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10. *ibid* -- Letter, Henry Woolcombe to Sir William Knighton Bart, 2/3/1824.
11. *ibid* -- *Bridge across the Tamar*, Handbill, 22 March 1830.



12. *Montrose Review* 26 March 1830. (See also) Rendel, J.M. 'Memoirs of the Montrose Suspension Bridge', *Proceedings of the Institution of Civil Engineers* (Session 27 April 1841), Vol 1 pp122-129.
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**Acknowledgement:**

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 Wright, Diane, W., Senior Assitant Librarian, Berwick Library, Northumberland.  
 Rendel, Palmer and Tritton.

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## PORTRAITS IN EXETER

Christopher G. Scott

Newton Abbot's Richard Beard settled in London where he bought most of the patent-right for the French 'daguerreotype' photographic process which used a silver-coated copper plate as a base for a high-definition photograph. The daguerreotype patent term for England and Wales (1841-1853) gave Richard Beard a near-monopoly on early commercial photography because of the limited use made of Fox Talbot's patented paper negative process. Richard Beard sold 'licences' to use the daguerreotype commercially. The Exeter licensee was a Mr Gill. (Interestingly, Trewman's *Exeter Pocket Journal* lists an Edwin Gill, portrait painter, Butcherow, Exeter, from 1832-1834.) Exeter's rooftop daguerreotype studio opened on Friday 29th July 1842 at no. 3 Castle Terrace.<sup>1</sup>

Today the four houses of the former Castle Terrace are 36-39 New North Road. The 'Locomotive Inn' forms part of the old no.4 and the former daguerreotype studio is still on the roof of the old no. 3. Today the high-ceilinged studio appears to be roughly 20ft long by 12ft wide not including the stairwell or the small area walled-off to make a back room. Originally the Exeter studio may have been one open area forming a slight 'L' shape and probably brightly lit from a large skylight. The former daguerreotype studio in Exeter is a rare find – probably the only one of its type in Britain.



Above: Former daguerreotype studio of 3 Castle Terrace, Exeter.



Left: Inside former daguerreotype studio: looking out to Northernhay Gardens.

The Exeter licensee, Mr Gill, may have shown the 'photographic portraits' seen at an Art Union conversazione<sup>2</sup> at Exeter during 1842 – perhaps giving viewers an inkling of the later debates concerning art and photography. Such later debates could be seething:

'Now, honestly, how many of those photographs do the young ladies justice? Do any? Are not the majority atrocious libels? In how many of the positions selected by the photographer would a portrait painter have placed his sitter? It appears singular that such an utter want of artistic feeling and taste should be shown in the majority of photographic portraits, but such is undeniably the case . . . In many cases, the professional photographer has taken up photography as a profession, and so long as he makes it pay he is content. He does it by machinery; he has no knowledge of art, no feeling for the beautiful; and in many cases, as any one can see, is entirely ignorant of the optical properties of his lenses . . . (On Landscapes): if any of my hearers have any idea of taking up photography as an art, I hope they will commence with a determination not to be content till they produce photographs as faithful to nature as possible, thus rendering them worthy to be classed as artistic productions . . . (On advice): Books and pamphlets on photography are plentiful, letters written to the journals are legion, and yet, I doubt if one in every twenty authors has ever shown a really good picture. And when you take away the standard works on photography, by Messrs. Hardwich, Sutton, Hunt, Lake Price, and one or two others, the first three being accomplished chemists, as well as photographers, few indeed are left of which the authors are known as accomplished photographers.'<sup>3</sup>

Echoing similar sentiments, a Dr Scott in 1866 also pointed out the use of 'furniture' in studio photography, especially the balcony:

'I never see this balcony but it reminds me of a story of a sign-painter, who though his range of subjects was limited, yet excelled in painting one thing – viz., a red lion. Whenever he was sent to paint a sign, whatever the landlord or his better half proposed, the artist was sure to talk them round to a red lion. This was a true sign for a British landlord to have. So it is with the photographs. A portrait itself is something sentimental. It is often a love-gift; and what so suggestive as moonlit nights, soft sighs, sentimental serenades, and stolen kisses, as a balcony. So we have a balcony in all possible forms, and under all possible conditions. Another object which constantly meets our eye is a Greek column, or something that is intended for such. This is introduced into all manner of interiors. For what purposes one cannot possibly imagine, or to what particular order it belongs it is difficult to tell. Then the high backed profusely carved chair is another piece of furniture in great request. And these chairs show their legs to such an extent, and with such ostentatious obtrusiveness, that one gets to feel, with the American ladies, the inefficacy of the exposure. In fact, it often becomes a question whether or not the artist intended to give the portraits of balconies, columns and chair-legs, the sitter being merely an auxiliary, so prominent are these made . . . The background should be of an even tint, and lighter towards the top. A curtain is often seen hanging down one side, and this is not a bad arrangement, if all pattern be destroyed, and no hard outline allowed to form a long line against the background. It may

also be made useful in bringing the figure into the background, to prevent the hardness felt when all the outline is distinctly traceable. You never see a picture from the easel of a great master where every part of the figure stands forth in marked outline from the background.'<sup>4</sup>

(The 'balcony' was still featured in studio portraits of soldiers during the First World War.)

Richard Beard's patent-right would expire in 1853, so it is intriguing that during August 1852 the Exeter engraver Owen Angel opened 'photographic rooms' making daguerreotype portraits at 92 Fore Street, Exeter.<sup>5</sup> Both Angel's wife and daughter practiced photography.<sup>6</sup> Angel received a silver medal<sup>7</sup> from the Birmingham Photographic Society (1861), and a medal<sup>8</sup> from the Photographic Society of Great Britain (1877). He would still copy old daguerreotypes<sup>9</sup> for customers as late as 1870. He became a member of the Exeter Guardians for St. Sidwell Ward,<sup>10</sup> and a member of the City Council.<sup>11</sup>

However, Exeter's Castle Terrace studio was still in business. During the 1850s-1860s the directories and census returns show the long association between the studio and a Mr John Jury – until his eventual retirement to Marlow Villa at nearby Union Road (identified today by the inscribed house name). By 1854 the Castle Terrace studio – known as 'Beard's Daguerreotype Institution' – was being used by the firm of Britton which also had a branch at 40 High Street, Barnstaple.<sup>12</sup> The Castle Terrace studio sold photographic 'apparatus and chemicals' as well as taking photographs,<sup>13</sup> but so did Owen Angel who advertised:

'Thomas' Xylo Iodide 1s. 6d. per ounce: pure chemicals of every description; glass baths and glass plates of all sizes; Canson's, Turner's, albumenized and waxed papers, at London prices; instruction given in the collodion process: daguerreotype portraits taken daily.'<sup>14</sup>

From 1854 the number of photographers in Exeter increased. Augustus De Niceville had his studio, the 'gallery of photography', at W. Spreat's Lithographic Establishment, 229 High Street.<sup>15</sup> De Niceville made stereoscopic portraits, also stereoscopic views probably marketed by Spreat who had the studio on his premises for many years and so may have learnt some photography.

Jonathan Walker, an Exeter engraver of 14 Gandy Street, was a photographer by 1856.<sup>16</sup> Of interest is the miniature painter Mr J. Tremlett who advertised:

'J. Tremlett, (Established Twenty-five Years,) Miniature Painter & Photographic Artist, 6 Lower Paris Street, And from the London School of Photography. Instantaneous Collodion Portraits taken daily, coloured (if desired) to resemble the finest miniatures. J.T. ventures to affirm that these Portraits for accuracy of likeness, and artistic finish, cannot be surpassed by any pictures of the kind either within or out of London, Exeter, February 6th, 1855.'<sup>17</sup>

Some paintings by Tremlett can be seen at the Devon and Exeter Institution (Exeter views) and Exeter Museum (two miniatures).<sup>18</sup>

By 1857 the London Photographic Company was advertising 'portraits for the million' from one shilling, and claiming 2309 portraits taken in three weeks at 45 High St., Exeter.<sup>19</sup> That firm had branches at 88 Union St. and 17 Bedford St., Plymouth. (Photography may have become part of a new form of business organisation – the

national company. The 'photograph' was an unusual product because it was unique yet mass-produced, and incorporated the consumer in the product.) Photographers vied with each other in offering their services. De Niceville had 'obtained a License for the use of Mr Rollason's Patent for the Production of Collodion Transfers on Paper, Silk, or Linen.'<sup>20</sup> whereas Owen Angel at 5 High St. offered 'Stereoscopic views and portraits. Families and Invalids waited on at their own residences.'<sup>21</sup>

The stereoscopic view slide had become more popular and could provide extra income for some photographers. Spreat advertised his publication of views of Lynmouth and Exeter Cathedral (probably taken by De Niceville)<sup>22</sup>, but more exotic views were available from a selection of nearly 2000 slides at Grant Brothers of 228 High St., Exeter, and 6 Victoria Parade, Torquay.<sup>23</sup> That firm sold slides of Switzerland, Germany, France, Algiers, The Crystal Palace, and notables, also theatrical representations. Besides these, Courti, the watch maker and optician, of 7 High St., Exeter was selling stereoscopic views both wholesale and retail.<sup>24</sup> Whatever extra income portrait photographers gained from view slides – it was probably limited for their own products. At a later date, with larger local views, such photographers as Owen Angel could advertise views of 'Exeter & Neighbourhood, by Bedford, Frith and O. Angel.'<sup>25</sup>

### Typical studio portraits from Devon Studios

They are known as 'Carte-de-visites', referred to usually as 'Cartes'

*N.B. A good source for the history of costume.*



*Carte-de-visite from the studio of Edwin Mudford, Newton Abbot. (Directory entries 1889-97)*



*Carte-de-visite from the studio of F. Kitto, Torquay. (Directory entries 1889 as Frederick Kittow – 1897)*

Portrait photography in Exeter seems to have grown out of a community of allied trades. Of the original nucleus of artists, lithographers, and engravers, Owen Angel stands out because of his longevity. In 1885 at Angel's 'Photographic & Fine Art Galleries', at 11 High St., lessons were given and every requisite supplied for 'crystoleum painting'; picture frames could be made to order; 'Fancy Goods' suitable for presents could be bought in a large showroom on the ground floor.<sup>26</sup> Angel's advertisements suggest his studio<sup>27</sup> was an interesting place to visit, which partly explains why for over forty years or more so many Exonians continued to have their portraits taken at 'Angel's.

Thanks are due to Mr Ian Maxted and staff at the Westcountry Studies Library, Exeter, for permission to reproduce material from the library's newspapers.

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## A DARTMOOR OCHRE WORKS

Helen Harris

Little appears to be known about a former working for ochre, the remains of which are plainly visible on the western slopes of Smeardon Down, in Peter Tavy parish on the edge of Dartmoor.

Ochre, a yellow clay-like substance, is a form of iron oxide (hydrated ferric oxide) which may occur as a product of the decomposition of lavas and basic igneous rocks, notably pyrite. In south-west England it has been found at several mining places, in clay-like beds or as a sediment in adits. In some cases it was extracted as a by-product of the main mining venture, and Dines notes around twenty sources in Cornwall and Devon, with total recorded output for the two counties amounting to about 7,000 tons, although this may be much less than actual quantities. Yellow ochres were also mined in the Golden Valley at Wick, Gloucestershire, and in Oxfordshire and Derbyshire until deposits became exhausted and working uneconomic, causing supplies to be imported from overseas.

Most people will probably associate the word 'ochre' and the names of related substances with colours in a paint-box, and, indeed, it was for use as a colour pigment that ochre became sought. Paint manufacture and papermaking have drawn on ochre supplies, as has the linoleum industry for use as a filler. It has also been used for tinting bricks and cement. The actual colour tones of ochre can, in fact, vary from a buff yellow through brown to shades of red, and these may become even brighter when the material is ground down. In trading matters the term ochre is generally used when the substance has a ferric oxide content of below 75 per cent – with a higher proportion it is called 'natural red oxide'. In several places manganese (also worked in the past for its colouring effects) occurs in proximity to iron oxide, and this may cause various shades of brown, from lighter 'siennas' where proportions of manganese are low, to deeper 'umbers' where there is a higher concentration, and these tones may be varied further as either 'raw' or 'burnt' – the latter being the product of roasting which produces particularly rich shades.

In Devon ochre was extracted in recorded quantities from Devon Great Consols – the famous nineteenth century copper mine in the Tamar Valley – and from Haytor and Smallacombe iron mines in Hsington parish, on Dartmoor's south-eastern fringe. Umber was also worked in nearby Ashburton, and both minerals also at places in north Devon. On the western side of the county ochre has been produced in small unrecorded amounts from the manganese mines at Chillaton and Hogstor, and in the Bowden Down and Whitestone areas of Brentor. (At Brentor ochre is said to have been worked from a pit for about ten years around 1880 by a Launceston firm, and washed in a stream there before being sent away in barrels.<sup>1</sup> Residues were also recovered there during the wartimes of the present century for use in camouflage paint).

So far, however, although the site itself offers clear indications, no information has come to light in published matter concerning the Peter Tavy ochre workings. Attention was drawn recently to these past activities by an elderly resident of Peter Tavy, Mr Frank Collins, who remembers being told of the 'ochre pits' by deceased family members, and hearing recollections from them of how the Higher Mill leat would at times

be coloured yellow due to water flowing from the area. Mr Collins has not been able to find any local person who knows anything about the ochre pits.

Documentary sources have revealed just a little about these past endeavours, and show that interest in the production of ochre at Peter Tavy dates certainly from as early as the 1840s. A notice in the *Mining Journal* of 19 July 1845, relating to Peter Tavy Ochre Works, offered two shares (in a company of 100 shares) for sale at an auction held in Plymouth by G. Carne.<sup>2</sup> Then, on 9 May 1846, *The Plymouth Times, Devonport, Stonehouse and West of England Advertiser* reported:

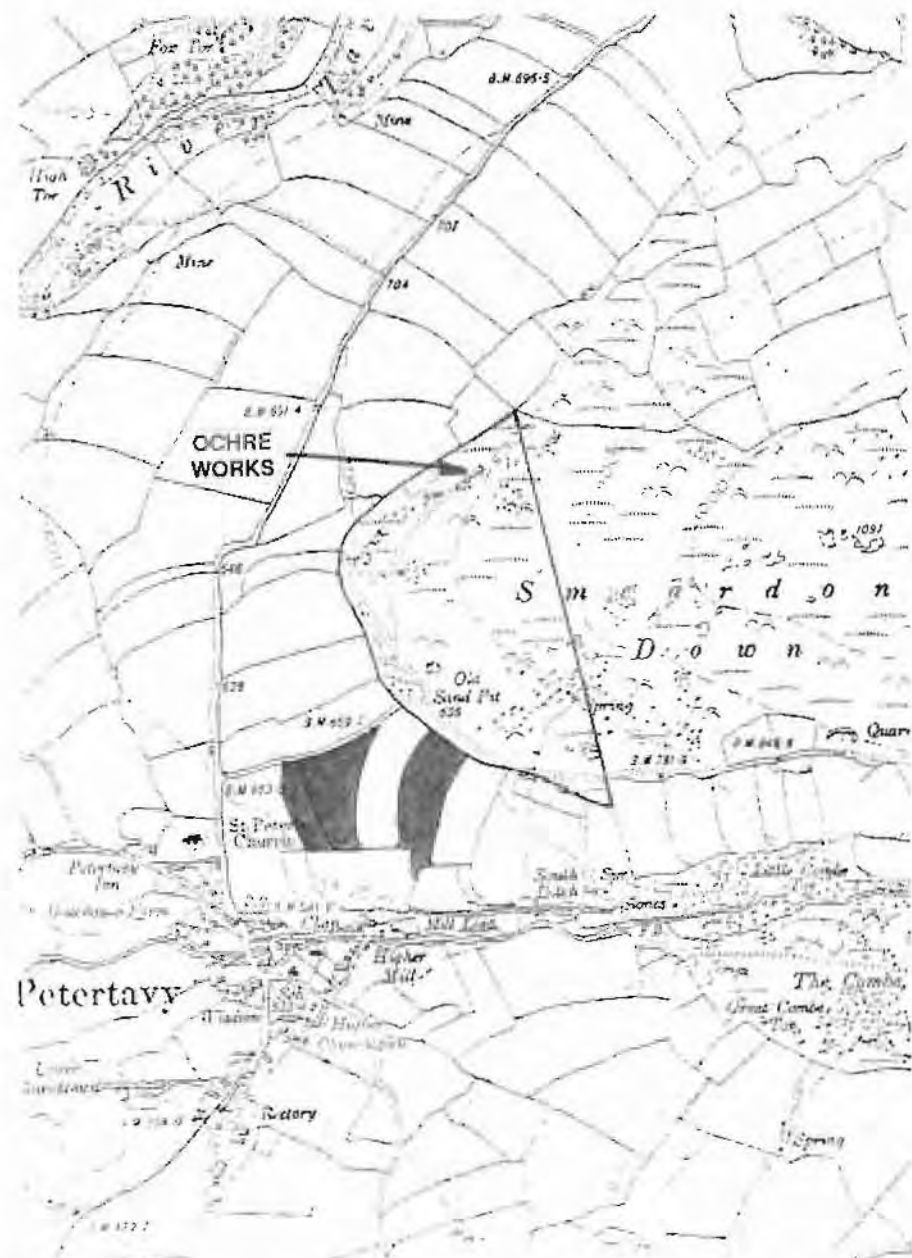
'**OCHRE WORKS ON DARTMOOR** – A company has been established for working on an extensive sett, in the parish of Peter Tavy, found to be very productive of yellow ochre: which it is stated can be raised at a great profit to the adventurers; upwards of 25 tons can be returned, and prepared for the market weekly, at from 25s. to 30s. per ton which can be readily sold at £5 and £6 per ton. The company is divided into 200 shares with a capital of £400 paid up, and it is calculated that about £150 more will be sufficient to bring them into a profitable state.'<sup>3</sup>

Whether or not operations proceeded on the site at this stage is not known. There are no indications of any actual production. Indeed, working of any significance in the 1840s seems improbable, judging by details of digging and site preparation authorised in draft documents a decade or so later.

In 1859 a draft was issued by the Duke of Bedford to a consortium of London men, giving permission for mining, and working for ochre in Peter Tavy parish, for a period of 21 years from Lady Day 1859.<sup>4</sup> Rent was to be £25, with dues of one-fifteenth on metals and minerals and 9 pence a ton for ochre 'to be dug, broken, raised and gotten within the said limits'. The indenture was in the names of William Sarl, Abraham Sarl and Joseph Sarl, all of 17 and 18 Cornhill, London, silversmiths; John William Williamson of Serle Street, Lincoln's Inn, Barrister at Law; and Mathew French Wagstaffe of 10 Walcott Place, Lambeth, surgeon.

A further document, a draft licence to work, was issued to the same parties the following year, to commence on Lady Day 1860 for 21 years, with rent again at £25 but dues now at one-tenth. The mining of other metals was not now authorised. The indenture allowed for the working of ochre on the strata of clay 'within or under all that parcel of land part of Smeardon Down, being part of the Commons of the Parish and Manor of Peter Tavy and also those several pieces or parcels of land called or known by several names of Heards, Stoneland, Eastland (These parcels of land in the occupation of Richard Peek as tenant)'. The area was defined by an accompanying map. (*See page 22*)

In order to 'bring to grass' the ochre, the licensees were entitled 'to dig and make such adits, shafts, pits, drifts, leats or watercourses and to erect such sheds, houses, engines, warehouses and other buildings as the lessees shall from time to time think necessary . . .'. Wayleave and passage for general traffic through the grounds, and farming, were reserved. Work was to proceed within 12 calendar months, and the efficiency of methods was specified, with the requirements of employing at least four able miners for at least six months. All the ochre found was to be properly dressed, fit for sale at least every 3 months, with due notice to the Bedford office in Tavistock to allow for sampling if required. There were further requirements concerning payment and accounts, maintenance of good repair, and the erection of fences.



Map to show the area of moorland (and the enclosed lands – shaded) defined in the 1860 draft licence. (Superimposed on the 6-inch OS map, second edition (1907), first surveyed 1882-3, revised 1904. 98SW).

It is tantalizing, having studied these documents, to observe, hand-written on the outside summary draft, the words 'Not proceeded with'. And further exhaustive investigations have failed to bring forth any further written information of this small industry which, from both site remains and personal recollection, clearly existed. It is amazing (though not uniquely so) that something that happened so late in history – little more than a century ago – should have left no record. One can only assume, taking available evidence into account, that the Peter Tavy Ochre Works may have been in operation in the 1870s or 80s – possibly by the 'Launceston firm' already referred to as being engaged at nearby Brentor, and that this was the subject of a fairly informal arrangement. Perhaps a reader of this article may be able to provide the missing link.

Remains of the ochre pits lies at an altitude of 750-800 feet, at SX 517782. The site can be approached along a grassy track from the moorland road that leads on from an eastward turn just north of Peter Tavy Church. What was probably the main extraction point, at the higher level, is marked by a small elongated pond, 25-30 metres in extent, banked by waste mounds on the lower side. From the far, northern end of the excavation are signs of a leat, about 80 metres in length, which ends at the slight ditch of the down's boundary wall. Although now dry, this ditch could possibly have carried water from tapped springs. About 12 metres below the working, amid much ground disturbance, are the grassed remains of a roughly rectangular pit, approximately 18 x 12 metres. This appears to have been divided by banks into quarters, probably as settling tanks. Two gaps in the pit's southern bank suggest exits to a further slightly lower level which appears as a continuing stage in the system's progression. In and around these groundworks it is easy to find small lumps of the typical yellow substance.

Leading into the working area from the southern side of Smeardon is the dry channel of a longer leat, clearly traceable for a third of a mile from the north side of the moorland road to Godsworthy. South of the road the leat is said to have continued through enclosed lands to a point of abstraction from the Peter Tavy Brook.

Plentiful supplies of water were essential for the ochre working. It appears that the usual process involved washing the material out of the beds in similar manner as for china clay. The resulting slurry then flowed to a series of settling tanks where coarser grits would separate and settle. The lighter particles, carried in suspension, would flow on, generally through a series of long narrow channels intercepted by turf-covered steps designed to catch and hold back the gritty wastes. The finer particles would continue to a tank at the end of the line for further settling and air drying, before being dispatched.

The market for ochre was not a large one, but specific and restricted, dealing in hundreds rather than thousands of tons. Nevertheless, where the ochre was suitable it could fetch a reasonably good price. It seems, however, that operations at the Peter Tavy works could not have been very long lasting, and no figures are available to indicate what profits, if any, were made.

*Course of the leat from the south side of Smeardon*



*Apparent site of the ochre extraction area. (Remains of the rectangular tank lie down to the left).*

*Rectangular area of what appears to have been the main, quartered, settling tank*



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## WHEELS WITHIN WHEELS

M.G. Dickinson

For the County Council's Centennial Jeffrey Stayer gave us an administrative and political history of the Devon County Council,<sup>1</sup> while Michael Hawkins contributed a history of the Highways of Devon (aimed at a somewhat wider audience).<sup>2</sup> Another decade is opening and the operation of the thirty year rule now opens a further segment of the Exeter City and Devon County Council records to would-be historians in a wide field. Among the records of greatest interest must be rather earlier ones, relating to the County's roads in the years when motor transport first began to have an impact on them. Here two brief sketches are offered: they are culled from the County Council's Draft Files series. Comparison with the appropriate Minutes both of full Council and of Committees, as well as their equivalents in the Exeter City series need to be made to obtain a final balanced history.

### I *The Exeter Bypass Road*<sup>3</sup>

Under the Exeter Town Planning Scheme of 1926 two routes had been proposed for the Exeter bypass road. The one running from Whipton to Alphington was chosen, while the alternative route, which lay outside the then administrative boundaries of the City (from Pinhoe via Middlemoor and Countess Wear to Matford) was rejected. No major step had been taken three years later, when, under the Trunk Roads Programme of 1929 (which was also an Unemployment Relief Measure) the then Minister of Transport began to bring pressure to bear on local authorities to commence work in earnest on the numerous road improvement schemes then being mooted throughout the country.

The fate of the Exeter scheme and the Whipton to Alphington route was decided at a Conference held in London on 13 December 1929. This route appeared to have secured official acceptance, when, in an episode reminiscent of a Hardy novel, the Minister left to catch a train, leaving vague instructions for the cost to be apportioned between the City and the County, but also leaving a fatal ambiguity as to the validity of the Conference decision.

The most positive result of the December 1929 Conference was to galvanize the County Council into taking action. Their response was to reject the Whipton to Alphington route on the grounds that a totally new crossing of the Exe floodplain would be very expensive to their own ratepayers. At the same time, it was alleged that the City would benefit from increased rateable values. By January of 1930, Andrew Warren, Surveyor of the County's South Eastern Roads Division, had produced a scheme entirely within the administrative County, over routes which, it was alleged, would probably have had to be improved in any event. His estimate for the Pinhoe to Matford route was £185,000, compared with the estimated £226,000 for the Whipton to Alphington route. Significantly, the County's proposal made use of an existing crossing of the Exe, Countess Wear Bridge and its causeways dating from 1773.

Amid protests from Exeter City at the duplicity of the County Council, Andrew Warren's scheme was submitted to the Ministry of Transport in September 1930. It was accepted for completion within five years, with an 80% Ministry grant, while the County was empowered to float a 20-year loan to meet its responsibility. Tenders were

prepared for three sections of the intended road, which were to proceed together. The sections were: Pinhoe to Hill Barton; Hill Barton to Countess Wear; and Countess Wear to Peamore (rather than to Matford). A proposal was made also for a fourth section from Peamore to Pocombe, but this suggestion remained nebulous and controversial.

However, hardly had work begun, when the National Emergency (the acceptable phrase for the financial crisis of 1931) struck. The County Council agreed to have the three accepted stages of the road completed in sequence rather than proceeding together. A decision on the Peamore to Pocombe section (estimated to cost £61,000) was postponed on the grounds that traffic for Cornwall would go through Exeter with or without an alternative route.

In the event, the contract for the section to Hill Barton was signed in May 1931. That for the second section was won by Staverton Builders and signed in October 1933. Problems over negotiations for the Countess Wear to Peamore section (the original contractor for the roadworks withdrew) lost the seven months of the year 1935 most favourable to road construction, and the new contractors signed only in November of that year.

It was not until 22 February 1938 that Dr Leslie Burgin, then Minister of Transport, opened the completed road. It had cost £230,000 and was finished in six years eight months, as against the original estimate of £185,000 over five years. The section to Pocombe remained a proposal.

Some of the minor details make almost as much impression as the overall picture.<sup>4</sup> The junctions, including bollards, were lit by gas in their early days; those at the Honiton spur road, Middlemoor, and Countess Wear being so equipped in 1935.

The Roads Beautifying Association and the County Agricultural Adviser (Colin Ross) put forward rival schemes for planting trees and shrubs over the larger features of the roadworks in 1938 and 1939.

Following completion of the bypass, County Councillors from Teignmouth and Dawlish, who had been among the most ardent supporters of Andrew Warren's scheme, found themselves victims of what would now be called blight. Traffic was heading straight past Matford towards Torquay and South Devon. They asked for the layout at this junction to be improved and for more prominent direction signs to be displayed.

### II *Evolution and Revolution in Road Planning*

In the context of English local history the turnpike, canal and even the railway communications systems of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, can be said to have been evolutionary. The policies of English national and local government for motor vehicle transport between 1920 and 1940 remained evolutionary. The typical response was piecemeal improvement of a road system fossilised by a century of railway development. It was a policy both land use and landlord friendly,<sup>5</sup> one which subsequent experience of motor roads makes us view with nostalgia.

For myself, I would define a revolutionary transport system by citing the examples of Roman roads in Celtic Britain, General Wade's roads in eighteenth century Scotland, and of the transcontinental railroads in nineteenth century North America. Significantly there is a motive of military conquest, colonial expansion, or at least of establishing a centralised government, common to these examples. It was surely no accident that the first road system in Europe designed specifically for motor traffic

should have evolved in National Socialist Germany.

Andrew Warren, surveyor of the South Eastern Roads Division of the Devon County Council, returned from a visit to German Autobahnen in 1937 a man bewitched and beguiled. The report<sup>6</sup> he brought back describes the German roads with something like awe. He reported that once a project was accepted 'it is full speed ahead', and that compulsory acquisition of land proceeded at a pace and on conditions which would be quite unacceptable in England.

If it is being too subjective to sense a hint of envy in this report, one can only imagine Warren's feelings as he and his colleague, R.M. Stone of the North Western Division, nursed Devon's roads through World War II against the onslaughts of the mechanised Allied armies concentrated in the South West of England.<sup>7</sup>

On the eve of his retirement in 1946, Andrew Warren drafted a plan<sup>6</sup> for a new road from Exeter to Plymouth. Though there are significant variations in the route chosen, there is a recognisable likeness to the present A38(T). (Perhaps it could be called a cousin germane to it?) Written around the plan itself are the costings: a bold project, they claim, would actually cost less than further patchwork improvements.

#### Sources for this and for further study

1. Jeffrey Staayer, *A History of Devon County Council, 1889-1989*, Devon Books, 1989, ISBN 0-86114-851-7.
2. Michael Hawkins (and D.L.B. Thomas), *Devon Roads*, Devon Books, 1988, ISBN 0-86114-817-7.
3. The sources in the Devon Record Office most likely to be of use in compiling a full account of the Exeter bypass are as follows: Exeter City Archives: Minutes, Series 1/46-47 (full Council); Series 9/11-12 (Streets Committee); Series 21/2 (Town Planning). Devon County Council (all need to be ordered 48 hours in advance of a visit): 148/9-14 (full Council); 161/6-13 (Main Roads); 161/6/1 (Bypass Sub Committee); Series B13-original Plans and Contracts; Draft Files nos. 644 to 657 (and subnumbers in each case).
4. The material for these comes from Devon County Council Draft Files 663/1; 765/1A; 806/5 - (which need to be ordered 48 hours in advance of a visit to the Devon Record Office.)
5. The then Lord Churston was able to make extended negotiations to protect his tenants at Dean Prior between 1929 and 1935: see Devon County Draft File 552.
6. The Autobahn report and A38 plan were placed - significantly - in a single file (Devon County Council Drafts 702/4).
7. Devon County Council Drafts 662/24 documents the removal of material from road dumps by a British unit, and Drafts 688/1/31 damage to a bridge by 'Yanks', among many examples! (In the small Northcountry town to which this writer's school was evacuated, removal of road surface by tanks of a Canadian armoured unit, and its replacement by Council workmen, was a regular diversion for the pupils there.)

## A VIEW OF LOCAL HISTORY IN DEVON

Neville C. Oswald

For one who had given no previous thought to local history it was a privilege, when I retired from medical practice in 1975 and returned to the county of my childhood, to seek at least an acquaintance with the subject. Yet my ignorance of the available facilities was then complete. The libraries in Exeter and Plymouth held no surprises, but the county record offices posed problems because I knew nothing of the nature of their possessions or the sort of services they provided. I learnt to visit them with specific requests and, when the staff came to know me, was delighted with the profusion of relevant material they managed to unearth. Walking through the Cathedral Close one day I saw, by chance, the brass plate of the Devonshire Association. Having previously heard of the association and thinking it to be similar to a London club with elderly gentlemen sitting in leather chairs, I entered and of course found something very different. Many other would-be local historians must have had similar experiences.

Already determined, before my retirement, to write an account of epidemics in Devon over the centuries, I made little progress until I went to the West Country Studies Library in Exeter. There I was immediately taken in hand by Mr Paley, the librarian, and was shown books and journals relating to the county and the valuable collection of copies of parish registers belonging to the Devon and Cornwall Record Society. They strengthened my resolve to write and thereby to join that band of amateurs which over the years has sought to illuminate the story of Devon's past.

I was initially impressed by two aspects of local history, namely the involvement of the University at Exeter and the row upon row of books on parochial history in the West Country Studies Library. I could not believe that academic historians would be in the least interested in anything I might write any more than I could understand why so many people had gone to such lengths in describing minutiae in the parishes in which they lived. Surely there were good historical reasons.

During the last 400 years Devon has been generously supplied with antiquarians and historians, amongst the most distinguished being Leland, Camden, Dugdale and Lysons, whose considerable contributions have embellished the rather turgid offerings of a host of lesser men and women. They were for the most part amateurs whose academic qualifications are not easily discovered. Many parsons and physicians may be recognised in the earlier literature by their prefixes and qualifications but the occupations of the great majority, including lawyers, cannot be identified. A glance at the *Transactions of the Devonshire Association* shows that from its beginning in 1862 to the 1930s about one-half of its authors had a university degree, usually a Master of Arts, most of them from Oxford or Cambridge. Since then, the proportion with degrees has risen to about four in five, a third of them from Exeter University. Evidently, that publication on the county's local history draws its contributors from a very small section of the community. The occupational distribution of some authors in the past twenty years is detailed in successive issues of *The Devon Historian*, of whom about one-quarter listed their connections with Exeter University and a similar number with other universities and teaching establishments. The remaining half were variously



occupied. Five engineers wrote respectively on two distinguished engineers of the past, a floating bridge, a nearby railway and, for good measure, a poet. Farmers, housewives and self-proclaimed amateurs recorded their different interests. Half-a-dozen diplomats and civil servants chose the two most popular subjects, namely biography and a local item from within their parishes. Authors in the *Transactions of the Devonshire Association* in the same period chose a rather wider scatter of titles with more emphasis on geology and flora, in keeping with the Association's various sections.

This motley collection of authors, with professors rubbing shoulders with beginners, gives recorded local history its peculiar flavour. Academic historians cannot possibly cover the whole range of local history, nor are they qualified to do so, while amateurs, some with specialist knowledge, are free to record opinions which may be scrutinised later by their betters and placed in a larger context.

Reverting to the books that have appeared in profusion during the last 150 years, they have progressed from the musings of parsons and country squires to a rather broader presentation, so that during the present century a sub-speciality of local history has come to be recognised. Whilst its scope has yet to be defined<sup>1</sup>, the qualities that a local historian should possess have been clarified. In essence, they embrace the ability to describe the origins, growth and possible decline of a local community, and to include its archaeological, geographical, economic, religious, parliamentary and civic aspects, together with a good grounding in English history.<sup>2,3</sup> To achieve these needs little less than a lifelong study. Yet that is what happens occasionally. For instance, Hoskins claims that his history *Devon*<sup>4</sup> is no more than a study of local history. Part-time amateurs would be well advised to settle for rather less.

What qualities are needed for making sensible observations on local history? Rouse's description of Hoskins' books on Devon as being 'learned, graphic and humane',<sup>5</sup> can hardly be improved upon. Learning can only come from years of study of national and, to some extent, international literature and constant association with one's colleagues at work; it may be acquired through diligence. The ability to be graphic is more difficult, whether in lecturing or writing, and needs hardly less study. Without it, historians are not alone in finding they lecture to meagre audiences and have few readers for their publications. Historians, as opposed to antiquarians whose function is primarily descriptive, must be humane in that their principal purpose is to place events of the past in an humane context.

### The Amateur Historian

There is no reason why would-be amateur historians cannot aspire to these qualities, but they do not come easily. With the necessary sense of purpose, they can undertake the laborious task of assembling data and then, aided by the literature, try to interpret them and finally acquire that combination of gravity and the common touch which can make even a dull subject exciting. My main task, in writing of epidemics in Devon, was to compile the total deaths month by month of over three million people which had been recorded in parish registers during the years 1538 to 1837.<sup>6</sup> At periods of great activity, such as the Napoleonic wars, burials in the Plymouth parishes of St. Andrew, Charles and Stoke Damerel average about 1,500 a year between them. I was unable to cover more than about forty years for one of them at a visit and that involved a journey of 25 miles each way. To transcribe the registers at Exeter, 45 miles distant, I stayed overnight in an hotel on several occasions. Other important registers still held in their parish churches necessitated separate journeys. The task involved a degree of

stoicism which I had acquired from previous experiences. For literature, Hoskins' *Devon*<sup>4</sup> and several medical books sufficed.

Searching the literature poses several problems for an amateur who has not done it before. Even a visit to a library may be a frustrating experience, principally because he does not know where to start and a blank expression is unlikely to stimulate the staff. In time, he discovers the contents of libraries, record offices and other collections and the means of finding his requirements. Even then primary sources, which are often so important, may be difficult to trace or be lodged as far away as London. In which case he may decide to compromise, especially if he lives on one of the remoter parts of the county, and limit himself to material that is easily accessible. Hence, articles by amateurs are almost by definition incomplete.

Acquaintance with local history may be gained in easy stages, through one of the many societies that have been founded in recent decades. These admirable institutions hold meetings throughout the winter months which attract enthusiastic audiences of local people, many of whom have lived in the vicinity for most of their lives. They especially welcome speakers whose subjects can be related to their members' experiences; for this reason, question times are often lively and informative. From time to time somebody amongst them, after months of preparation, summons courage to address an audience for the first time after which, amidst general acclaim, he (or she) sits down spent but secretly exultant. The first hurdle has been surmounted and the new speaker is able to contemplate his future ambitions.

Having sampled the delights and frustrations of his first communication, he may have difficulty in selecting another theme, unless he has a special experience or qualification he is able to exploit. He faces an infinity of alternatives. He may feel, as many have done before him, that an historical subject is not quite respectable unless it refers to something at least 200 years ago. Thus, he may soon find himself delving into an age quite unknown to him, whose literature, if it is before 1650, is hard to read. If he has nobody at hand to encourage and advise him, he may wilt or at least defer judgement. Alternatively, he may select something from recent history, consoling himself with the thought that Leland, Camden and Dugdale all wrote of their own times. If he cannot even manage that, he may well give up. After all, most amateur historians seek no more than a pleasant diversion with a quasi-intellectual content. They know they are free to pull out at any time, but those who do may live to regret it.

Do amateurs choose suitable subjects? For the most part they favour items of a limited scope. For example, a detailed description of the local baptismal font might make an admirable contribution to a local history society, but, unless it happens to be a very special font, it is unlikely to excite much attention further afield. Most amateurs would be well advised to select topics of more general appeal or of more importance to the county's history as a whole. Part of the problem, it seems, is not that amateurs choose unwisely but that suitable subjects often fail to find the best amateurs. Professional and business people such as industrialists, financiers, lawyers, agriculturalists and others, many of them retired, have much to offer given their specialist experience. Most of them have read their appropriate journals for years and know something of the historical background of their subject. Yet very few apply their expertise to local history where, in their own sphere, they could speak or write more authoritatively than anybody else. There are many reasons why this is so, ranging from a preoccupation with other hobbies to a lack of the stimulus required to overcome the initial difficulties.

## The Scientific World

After writing scientific articles for many years, I found the switch to local history a little difficult. Historians are blessed with a plethora of facts. For example, they know that such and such a building was erected in such and such a year or period and, having selected an aspect of it for study, they are able to build on a factual base. Scientists are equally concerned with 'facts', but they need to accustom themselves to seeking them in a sea of uncertainty in which solid facts are few and far between. Certainly a broken limb may be real enough, but detailed assessment and management inevitably involve arbitrary decisions which may or may not be the right ones. In order to lessen the chances of error, clinicians make use of comparisons and acquire at least an acquaintance with statistics, neither of which has found much favour in local history.

Comparisons are fundamental to the advancement of clinical medicine and it is difficult to see why they should not also be important to local history. Take again the example of a baptismal font. It may be described in isolation or as part of a parochial history. For many scientists, a description of several fonts of similar type and period should be preferable in that, having selected fonts as a starting point, they would seek to nibble away at them until they felt they had something useful to contribute and then leave it to others to take the matter further, hoping perhaps that somebody would eventually write a comprehensive study of Devon's fonts. Amongst the reasons why this is unlikely to happen would seem to be the principle that local historians ordinarily favour an extended parochial history. Also, an amateur, having selected his local font, is more likely to limit his observations to his parish than to go further afield, thereby adding one more font to those that have already been described.

A scientist's assessment of figures is often far removed from the popular conception of them, but, local historians do not ordinarily allow themselves to be unduly inhibited by them. Yet carefully selected figures from the past are able to provide a framework for local history that is rarely exploited by amateurs. For instance, the totals of men and ships in Devon ports from the Calais Roll to 1346 to the official statistics of modern times provide a solid foundation for further study. Similar figures are available for populations, husbandry, social services, education and many other subjects. Properly selected, they can give substance to an otherwise undistinguished article, but they need to be used with circumspection. It is often easy to take them at their face value when they are either unreliable or not large enough for conclusions to be drawn from them. Curiously, some authors seem to be carried away by figures, particularly from centuries-old wills and the like, and insist on copying long lists of minute amounts of money when a brief summary would suffice.

## Conclusion

Interest in the history of Devon is probably greater now than it has ever been. Apart from academic institutions, which have the responsibility of setting standards, there is a considerable range of organisations almost wholly sustained by amateurs, which presents a seemingly infinite variety of subjects in the field and the lecture room to its members. Yet local history has been described as the Cinderella among historical studies.<sup>7</sup> In a sense, it will always be subservient to national studies but, with increasing interest being shown in the day to day lives of ordinary people over the centuries, the social history of a nation can only be compiled with the aid of local publications. Hence, the value of some seemingly modest essays by amateurs may, in time, achieve a significance that was not apparent when they were written.

## References

1. Finberg, H.P.R., and Skipp, V.H.T., *Local History. Objective and Pursuit*. David and Charles, Newton Abbot. (1973). pvii.
2. *ibid.* p10.
3. Hoskins, W.G., *Local History in England*. Longman. (1972). p8.
4. Hoskins, W.G., *Devon*. David and Charles, Newton Abbot. (1972). ppixvi-xx.
5. Finberg, H.P.R., and Skipp, V.H.T., 1973. *op. cit.* p22.
6. Oswald, N.C., 'Epidemics in Devon, 1538-1837' *Transactions of the Devonshire Association Vol 109. (1977)*. pp73-116.
7. Finberg, H.P.R., and Skipp, V.H.T., 1973. *op. cit.* p2.

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## REVIEWS

(Readers are advised that opinions expressed by reviewers are their own, and not necessarily those of the Editor or of the Devon History Society as a whole).

**Sir Francis Drake**, by John Sugden, Barrie and Jenkins, 1990, 355 pp., £18.95.

Drake remains, on all counts, an outstanding figure, the greatest English seaman of all time, a great professional, a great leader and, certainly by the standards of his own day, a man of great humanity. Not everyone will agree of course, but now, for the first time for one hundred years we have a full-scale biography, gathering in one book virtually all that is known and some that is surmised about this son of Devon. It is in fact a very long book, that in itself being a testimony to the enormous advances made, particularly since the Second World War, in the study of Drake's own career and of Tudor maritime and naval history. Scholars have scoured the archives of both the Old and New World, with the result that Drake can be viewed through the eyes both of his own countrymen and of foreign nationals, usually with a mixture of envy and admiration.

This new biography has been written primarily for the general reader, and indeed the specialist will find little that is new. It is however not exactly holiday reading, the author breaking up the narrative with discourses into the historical background. It must be said that he is more at home in the world of national and international politics than in the minutiae of local history, which still has much to tell us of Drake's role in the intervals between his major voyages. For instance the problem of Plymouth's water supply is attributed to 'the filth of settlements' upstream rather than to the tinworks. There is a reference to an earl of Devonshire (sic) in the 1580s, a time when there was not even an earl of Devon. Drake was one of some half dozen deputy lieutenants, not *the* Deputy Lieutenant. There is misunderstanding, too, on pp.161-2, of the significance of feudal tenure. Finally, for the record, the story of the pardon of Edmund Drake, Francis's father, in 1549 for highway robbery was first noted by H.P.R. Finberg in 1951. But these are quibbles about a book which should be in every public and school library, and as prices of books go these days it is good value for all who are building up a local history collection.

Joyce Youings

Michael Wickes is to be congratulated upon his enterprise in editing and publishing this edition of the returns for Devon to the 1851 Census of Religious Worship, the only official census of its kind ever conducted. Now, for the first time for Devon (though it is not the first county to achieve the distinction), the salient information is available in a convenient form that saves historians the time, cost and trouble of visiting the PRO at Kew. The county's local and denominational historians should be particularly grateful. There are only a few points to complain about, one is the inconsistency of references to the Census itself: it was the 'Census of Religious Worship', not, as it is variously labelled here, a 'Religious Census' or even a 'Church Census'. Secondly, the editor has made his own numerical ordering of the returns, alphabetically by parish within each of the county's registration districts, and ignores completely the numbering carried by the original returns in the PRO, so that, for example, Dawlish parish church which is, at Kew, numbered as HO 129/283: 1.1.11 now becomes simply 265 in this listing. This makes cross-checking rather difficult for anyone who might still wish to refer to the MS returns. It would have helped if the editor had retained the PRO number reference alongside his own. Thirdly, the introduction to this edition, though helpful and interesting in itself, is hardly a serious analytical treatment of the material that follows and does little more than explain its provenance and pick out a few of the more interesting entries. Though Mr Wickes has generously the writings of this reviewer on the utilisation of the 1851 returns, he leaves their statistical and analytical approaches for others to apply to the Devon material. In fact there is almost nothing here to guide presume too much about their ability to exploit it fully and properly unaided.

But these are modest blemishes. Michael Wickes has done a thorough and accurate job within the brief (largely one of listing and transcribing) he set himself and he has added three very useful indices to the material, covering place-names, surnames and denominations respectively, which should save some researchers a good deal of time. He deserves our thanks for an important job very tidily accomplished.

#### *Bruce Coleman*

**Early-Stuart Mariners and Shipping: The Maritime Surveys of Devon and Cornwall, 1619-33**, ed. Todd Gray. Devon and Cornwall Record Society, New Series, Vol 33, 1990. ISBN 9 901853 33 X. xxviii and 171 pp. Available from Assistant Secretary of the Society, 7 The Close, Exeter, £10 post free.

In the later sixteenth century many detailed surveys of ships and seamen were carried out (see annotations in M. Oppenheim, *History and Administration of the Royal Navy*, vol. 1 (1986, repr. 1961), 171-7; A.P. Usher in *QJry. Int. Economics* xiii, 466-8), including some for the 1570s and 1580s for Devon and Cornwall (see also M. M. Oppenheim, *The Maritime History of Devon* (1968), 38-10). After that no such surveys are available for the two counties until the early decades of the next century. This new volume brings together these seventeenth century surveys and for the first time publishes them in full. They include a survey of 1619 of mariners and ships in south Devon; surveys of 1626 of the same for north Cornwall, south Cornwall, south-west Devon, and

north-east Devon, as well as one of ships only for Dartmouth; and a survey of north Cornwall for 1629 of vessels and mariners. A series of appendices adds to these: surveys of about 1619 and of 1627 of ships at Dartmouth and Plymouth; a list of vessels prepared at Plymouth in 1628 for five-ships; and naval tables of 1628-9 and 1635. Together these surveys provide the names of some 6,000 individuals and data on about 600 vessels, and embrace between them the whole coast of Cornwall and all that of Devon except for the parishes of north Devon west of the River Taw. The fullest of the surveys, the 1619 return, unique to Devon, hitherto unknown and discovered among the Pepsy manuscripts, is very significant, especially including Dartmouth except for vessels and owners) and the Exe estuary. The records are meticulously edited and presented and the data in them are made easier of access by the provision of excellent indexes of place, persons, and ships. The volume is thus a mine of information for those interested in occupational structure, many aspects of maritime history, and in the local history of individual places, as well as to family historians.

The surveys are, however, traps for the unwary user, and information should not be lifted from the volume nor conclusions derived from the surveys without prior perusal of the excellent editorial introduction. Dr Gray makes it clear that the documents cannot be considered to be complete records of the matters they appear to comprehend. Thus the 1619 and 1626 surveys of south Devon, for instance, give very different numbers of seamen; those of north Cornwall of 1626 and 1629 quite different totals of ships. And comparison of the ships listed in the 1619 and 1626 surveys of Plymouth and Dartmouth betray a lack of careful compilation. Again the same individuals may appear, for example, in one survey as fishermen and in another merely as sailors, while the ages attributed to the same men in different surveys indicate considerable lack of precision by the recorder. Moreover, in some instances it is not clear whether all the owners of vessels are given or only the main ones. For the reasons for such discrepancies the editor provides evidence and suggestions of which space prevents discussion here, though oftentimes (as with many records of the period of a statistician nature) puzzlement remains.

For the cautious, however, the volume presents a body of evidence well worth having. This is especially so if information culled from it is not used in isolation. Thus the data on ships and shipowners could be married with information in the Exchequer port books (available for all the Devon ports and most of the Cornish ones for years around the mid-1620s), letters of marque, probate records, admiralty court records, and so on. Information on individuals may be linked with evidence from fiscal records, the probate returns, parish registers, other parish and borough records, and the like. Some well-known individuals catch the eye (Lignatus Jurdain of Exeter, Nicholas Roope of Dartmouth, for instance; and my 'Roger Mallett', owner of a Topsham ship (p.47), be Roger Mallett someone mayor of Exeter?) but we must be grateful, too, for the revelation by name of many men lower down the social scale.

*W.R. Stephens*

**Morwellham Quay, a history: a Tamar Valley mining quay, 1140-1900** by Anther Patrick. Morwellham Quay Museum. 1990. 99pp. £6.95 ISBN 0 95 16360 0 6.

Morwellham Quay is now familiar to Devonians and many from further afield who come to enjoy the displays of the Quay Museum which largely reflect life there in the mid-nineteenth century when it was very active as a copper port and became a place of more than local significance. And it is on this period between 1844 and about 1859 that Miss Patrick quite properly concentrates. She supplements her story of these years with two other chapters, one on the people of the hamlet (supported usefully by transcripts from the detailed census returns of 1841 to 1881) and a discussion of maritime activities there (with an Appendix which provides short histories of two barges and four coasting vessels which traded up to Morwellham in the nineteenth century). Building on her previous research, Miss Patrick explains how Morwellham Quay came to be a very active port in the middle of the nineteenth century. This central section is preceded by an account of the early years there. Despite what appears on the title page, Miss Patrick states that 'the first record of Morwellham only occurs in the mid-thirteenth century' (p.9) and not in 1140. Using the rather few scraps of information available, Miss Patrick then sketches the history of Morwellham under the ownership of Tavistock Abbey and then of the Russells (who became Dukes of Bedford in 1694) until the nineteenth century. Her final chapter on 'The twentieth century' outlines what happened at Morwellham between 1900 (the terminal date of the title page) and 1970 when the project to establish an open air museum was launched. This well-illustrated volume will enable the visitor – and others interested – to understand better the history of Morwellham. The author concludes by underlining the fact that 'without that extraordinary development last century (when Morwellham became a major copper exporting port) there would not be a story to tell' (p.66). It is to be hoped that her optimistic final statement that 'today, Morwellham has a bright future of another kind' (p.66) as an open air museum will be justified.

*Walter Minchinton.*

**From Haldon to Mid-Dartmoor in Old Photographs** compiled by Tim Hall. Alan Sutton, Stroud 1990 £7.95. ISBN 0 86299 609 0.

The Devon bibliophile has become so used to having books packaged as between Dartmoor and the rest of the county that it comes as a surprise to find a book straddling the National Park boundary. This book encompasses a large triangle of country extending from Drewsteignton and Throwleigh in the north, to South Brent in the south, and Chudleigh in the east, and this unusual treatment has succeeded admirably.

Tim Hall – referred to as the 'collector' – has thrown his net widely, and has brought together some fascinating illustrations, only a few of which have been published before. They are grouped in useful sections: farming, transport, industries and so on.

The Great Rock Mine at Hennock only closed in 1969, but is now almost forgotten. Several photographs show the works in operation. Likewise, other mines and quarries further up the Teign valley are depicted. Scatter Rock Quarry had its own railway trucks which took its material around the GWR system, and these are shown at Christow Station.

To get down to apparently trivial detail, where else would one discover the pattern of metal studs in farm labourers' boots in the 1890s? Two reclining leather-gattered

workers unselfconsciously display their footwear to the camera.

There are early photographs of the treeless margins of the Kennick, Tottiford and Trenchford reservoirs, and a very stark looking Moorland Hotel below Hay Tor. Two Clarkson steam omnibuses stand in Chagford Square (c1905) happily unaware of the kind of confusion they would cause were they to park in such a position 85 years later, and a c1900 picture of a sheep sale in the same area shows over 100 men sizing up the animals, every man wearing a hat or cap, and not a woman in sight!

Of course, a book of old photographs stands or falls by the perceptiveness of the captions, and here Tim Hall is usually reliable. His social comment – beginning with a three-page introduction – is helpful without getting in the way.

There are few minor slips, however. I think the weapon carried by Mr Olding of the Lustleigh Home Guard is a Thompson sub machine gun and not a Sten gun, and surely the telegraph after which the Telegraph Hill near Bickington was named had its western terminus at Plymouth and not Penzance? (See *The Old Telegraphs* Geoffrey Wilson, Phillimore, 1976).

The book is neatly assembled, but some of the photographs lack definition and possess a foggy greyness which I suspect owes more to poor reproduction than the original quality of the print.

*Brian Le Messurier*

**Eight Views of Cullompton and Neighbourhood** by J.C. Mitchell 1851. Reprint David Pugsley 1991. Sold in aid of Cullompton Church Organ Fund. 8pp. illustrations, 12pp. text. £5.00 from the Church.

This attractive facsimile Victorian keepsake has on its back cover the original printer's own advertisements from which he would seem to have been able to cater for most needs of Cullompton life from music strings to insurance against hail.

The choice of illustrations reflects contemporary tourist taste with the majority showing the church. Hillersdon House comes in as the local Seat but there is only one view inside the town, that of the respectable part of the High Street. The Particulars and Description note the decline of the woollen trade, the remaining mills now being concentrated under Upeott and Sons but the West of England Bell Foundry was still active and there were two large tanneries in the town. A watercourse on both sides of the main street was suggested as the likely cause of Cullompton's reputation for promoting and preserving health but most space is devoted to the polite attractions of the church, vicarage and Hillersdon House. The Waldrons and the Manor House are not mentioned. The author does, however, recommend an ascent of Knowle Hill from which can be seen the down train from London 'in all its daring grandeur . . . an infuriated monster in fearful progress . . . hastening on with increased fury . . .' The price reflects the cost of organ repairs.

*Adrian Reed*

**Churston Story 1088-1988** by Jean H. Tregaskes, 48pp., £2.50 including postage from Miss J.H. Tregaskes, Darracott, Jubilee Road, Bridgetown, Totnes TQ9 5BW.

The introduction to *Churston Story* signalled that it would be found to be a local study with a difference. Jean Tregaskes has set out to depict the history of the Church at Churston Ferrers both as a building and as a community. She has used her imagina-

tion to being the facts in her story to life, nevertheless it is soundly based on surviving evidence relating to Churston and its inhabitants, supported by her own awareness of the wider historical context spanning nine hundred years. The evolution of the parish church of St. Mary the Virgin, Churston Ferrers (so named in 1968) offers a text-book picture of changing styles in English church architecture over this long period, and is supported by simple plans, which will be particularly useful for those setting out to explore the church for themselves. What is perhaps even more significant is the consistent participation of local people in the life and maintenance of the church from the Norman period to the twentieth century. Evidence may be found within the church of the interest of the Ferrers, Yarde and Buller families, and represented in more recent times by the generosity of the family of Lord Churston and of Agatha Christie Malloyan, D.B.E. The author acknowledges the particular problems of dealing with the twentieth century. This section will be especially interesting to members of the local community and is an impressive record of service and determination for the general reader to appreciate. The booklet is generously illustrated with relevant photographs of the features discussed. The dedication is personal, but speaks of the loyalty which this church, in a less well known part of Torbay, has enjoyed for generations.

*John Bosanko*

**The South Devon Herd Book Society**, ed. Jerry Horsman. Pub. by SDHB Society, 1991. 'In-house' circulation, but surplus copies possibly obtainable from the Secretary, South Devon Herd Book Society, Courtenay Park, Newton Abbot at around £2. 67pp. Many photographs and drawings.

This attractively produced booklet deserves wider availability than that limited by society membership. Produced to mark the South Devon Herd Book's centenary in 1991, with financial assistance from the Cornish Mutual Assurance Co. Ltd., it is compiled by Jerry Horsman with valued research and writing assistance from Dr Neville Oswald.

The first part of the work traces the history and development of the breed. Known at least as early as the seventeenth century, for the past 200 years the South Devon has been well established in its 'homeland' – the area between the Rivers Teign and Tamar in south Devon, and in much of Cornwall. Earlier used as draught beasts, these large light brown cattle have been valued for their versatility – the dual purpose ability to produce both good beef and milk of high butterfat quality. Successful exports, resulting in South Devon representations across the world, and challenges brought by such British breeds as the Friesian and the Hereford, as well as by the 'continentals', are all explained.

The second part of the study comprises a series of appendices, commencing with a report of the inaugural meeting of 1890. It was interesting for this reviewer to find in this section a reported speech by her great-grandfather, W.R. Coulton, and to come across numerous other familiar names. This little book is a useful contribution to the history of the county's farming, which currently faces further challenges. It is to be hoped that the South Devon breed will maintain its presence and quality, despite the modern necessary trend towards non-agricultural diversifications.

*Helen Harris*

**Living with History** by Jean Cardwell. Celtic Cross pub. 1991. 130pp. Softback. £6.95. ISBN 0 9516909 06.

This book, which centres on four Victorian houses – three in south-west Devon and one in Cornwall – is attractively produced, well printed, pleasant to handle, and contains a wealth of old photographs, many of them previously unpublished. It is disappointing, therefore, to find that the text makes difficult reading. This is mainly because the setting out of the subject matter appears unplanned and unstructured, without logical progression. It is also due to inadequate explanations of site locations, for which included maps are of little help, and the confusion caused by name changes of different properties at different times. The houses concerned are Dousland House and the Rock Hotel in the Yelverton area, the State House, Land's End, and Membrand Hall, Noss Mayo. Of these, the chapter on Membrand is perhaps the clearest to follow. Three pages of this section are devoted to reproducing the full text of an article published in *The Western Morning News* in 1960. (Its author is unaccredited, but recalled by this reviewer as being the late Robin Tulce.)

It is irritating to see the constant insertion of an apostrophe before the plural s of years in decades (e.g. 'the 1850's'), and other shortfalls in accepted editorial standards such as the phrase 'different to', used more than once. Such errors are not uncommon in some small-scale publishing. These criticisms are offered and intended as objective advice, especially as it is noted that a continuation of the series, with further studies by this author/publisher, is in preparation. There is much to commend the idea, and admiration for Mrs Cardwell's enterprise in acquiring the use of so many interesting pictures.

*Helen Harris*

**Poor Relief In Devon, Two Studies** by Susannah WHEELER and Sarah EYLES. Exeter, Devonshire Association, 1991, 40pp. £1.80. ISBN 0 85214 048 7.

In a novel departure from its customary scholarly activities the Devonshire Association has launched a new series for schools under the editorship of its Registrar, Hugh BODEY. The two chapters in this volume consist of two dissertations submitted for the 'A' Level History syllabus. One studies the poor law in Abbotsherswell and the other a comparison of the poor law in the 1920s in Dudley and Totnes. They show the use of a wide range of primary sources; overseers' account books, registers of parish apprentices, settlement indentures, bastardy documents, returns of poor relieved, admissions to the workhouse. Local newspapers are utilised and in the case of the 1920s, oral history. The range of primary sources used suggests our archives are in a better state than our school and municipal libraries for the secondary sources tend to be long dated old favourites rather than the most recent work. As one dissertation is from the public school sector and one from the state sector this is apparently a shared problem. Nevertheless any project which encourages the study of social history in our schools is to be welcomed as a useful innovation.

*J.H. Porter*

## OTHER PUBLICATIONS RECEIVED

*The Local Historian* Volume 21 Number 1, February 1991. ISSN 0045585. 48-page journal of the British Association for Local History. Contains articles (illustrated), reviews, news of publications, readers' letters. Subscription to journal only: £12 p.a. Subscription to journal and membership of the Association: £15 p.a. Details from: Shopwyke Hall, Chichester, West Sussex. PO20 6BQ.

*Yelverton & District Local History Society Newsletter No 8* (1990). Editor: Peter Hamilton-Leggett, Old Sunday School, Walkhampton. 50p. An enterprising publication packed with interesting material, news, articles and numerous short interesting items.

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## NOTICES

Ernie Bevin In Devon. Postscript.

On the wall of the Crediton Youth Centre, facing the road is a plaque that reads as follows.

Rt Hon Ernest Bevin, PC. 1881-1951.

Pupil at this school from 1890 to 1892.

HM Minister of Labour and National Service 1940-1945.

HM Foreign Secretary 1945-1951.

The Crediton Youth Centre was once the Hayward School and stands almost immediately across the High Street from Crediton Church.

### *Sundials*

Mrs Janet Thorne, 15 Chesterfield Road, Laira, Plymouth PL3 6BD, is researching sundials. In this connection she particularly seeks information on John Berry, 1724-1796, stonemason, of Marwood in north Devon. She also needs to trace Jeannie Crowley who wrote articles for the *Transactions of the Devonshire Association* on sundials in both north and south Devon in the 1950s. If any readers can help, Mrs Thorne would be most grateful to hear from them.

### Joy Beer

It is with sadness that we record the death, on 25th July, of Miss Joy Beer. Joy was an active member of not only the Devon History Society, but of various other history societies, and to all of them she gave her enthusiastic support. She had been a member of the Council of the DHS since 1981, and was a most regular attendee, always forward-looking and positive in outlook. Her presence and friendliness will be greatly missed.

H.H.

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# UNIVERSITY OF EXETER PRESS

## English Local Studies Handbook

A guide to resources for each county  
Susanna Guy

This handbook provides for each of the old English counties a comprehensive but not exhaustive list of the names and addresses of the principal local studies collections, local record offices, local history societies, local history journals, and museums with local studies collections. Full cross-references are given linking the new county areas to the old counties, together with maps for each county showing the changes in boundaries in 1974 or, in the case of Greater London, in 1965.

Autumn 1991 216pp approx. illus.  
0 85989 369 3 PB provisional price £7.95

## Centre and Periphery

Brittany and Cornwall & Devon compared  
edited by M.A. Havinden, J. Quéniart, J. Stanyer

Scholars from the universities of Haute Bretagne (Rennes 2) and Exeter have been collaborating in comparative research on the positions of Brittany and the far South West of England in their respective states. Both peninsulas are geographically 'peripheral'; the research has concentrated on how far they are also marginal in the social, economical and political systems. Key issues are: how did peripherality arise? What is the present experience of peripheral status? And what does the future hold for the two regions? The results of the research are presented in more than twenty original reports and comparative perspectives are offered in several overviews of the findings of the project. There is a foreword by John Caff, Managing Director of the Devon and Cornwall Development Company.

Autumn 1991 288pp approx. illus.  
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