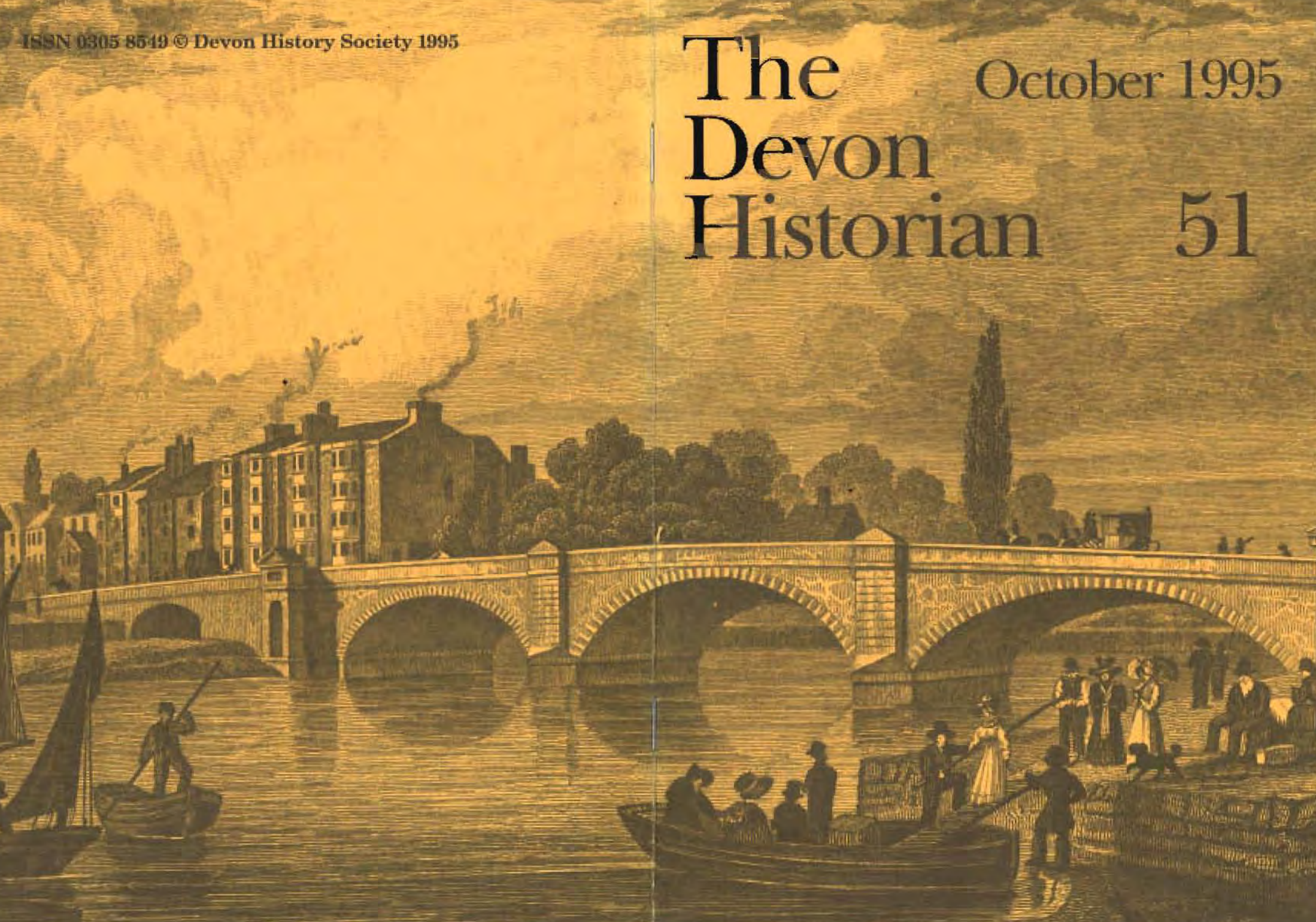


The Devon Historian

October 1995

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The Devon Historian is available free to all members of The Devon History Society. Membership subscriptions run annually from 1 May to 30 April and for the coming year will be as follows: Individual: £10.00; Family (that is two or more individuals in one family): £15.00; Corporate (any society or organisation): £15.00; Life Membership (open to individuals only): £100.00. Please send subscriptions to the Treasurer, Mr Edwin Haydon, Ford Farm, Wilmington, Honiton EX14 9JU.

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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, Whitechurch, Tavistock PL19 9BU. The deadline for the next issue is 30 November 1995. 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 CONFERENCES

The AGM of the Society will take place at St Luke's College, Exeter, on Saturday 21 October from 10.30am to 3.45pm.

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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 £3, post free, and from No 37 onwards £4. Also available post free are *Index to The Devon Historian* (for issues 1-15, 16-30 and 31-45), and *Devon Bibliography* (1980, 1981, 1982, 1983 and 1984) all £2 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 2,000 - 2,500 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.: 30 November 1995, etc.

ASPECTS OF NORTH DEVON'S TIMBER TRADE, 1780-1830

Michael Nix

On 15 November 1794 William Marshall, travelling near Peters Marland, noted his admiration for the 'valuable ship timber of this district'. On the same day he also observed, near Hatherleigh, 'a large parcel of hewn Timber, fit for Ship Building, collected by the side of the Road'.¹ Contemporary newspaper advertisements for timber sales regularly referred to the suitability of this particular commodity 'for his Majesty's Navy'. Competition for the product also extended to the builders of merchant vessels and the exporters of oak bark. The cumulative demand placed a heavy burden on the north Devon timber resources.

In 1808 Charles Vancouver elaborated on the region's timber-growing potential, remarking that

the sides of the valleys through which the Exe, the Torridge and the Taw discharge their waters, as well as the combes and small hollows dependent on them, are all more or less adorned with oak woodlands, which if permitted to attain their maturity and perfection the soil and the climate are so capable of affording; few instances of inferior growth of timber would be found to that which is so much pleasure beheld at Stevenstone or Heanton Park, or the demesnes of Eggesford, Clovella Court, and Hartland Abbey.²

Encapsulated in this and other extracts are his concerns about the over-exploitation of woodlands by landowners and farmers, and the generally poor level of management. Vancouver expressed this more forcefully when he opined that anyone viewing with an eye to general utility, the present state and condition of the oak timber in this country, cannot without pain observe so general a destruction of this our principal bulwark ...

So alarmed was he at the widespread wastage of timber in Devon that he even recommended an ordinance to prevent the cutting down of any tree without the mark of a timber inspector.³

Later, in 1811, the editors of Risdon's survey echoed the same story, believing that the timber of the county has been much reduced in quality of late years, and the high price of foreign wood has caused a vast number of our native oaks to bow their heads to the axe. Planting is not so general as it is desirable it should be ...⁴

Demand had long outpaced supply, creating severe pressures on a seriously diminishing resource.⁵

Vancouver's portrait of a region intersected by wooded valleys, where growth was protected from the worst of the prevailing winds, and by deep combes sharply descending from the coastal watershed to the sea, is clearly delineated in Figure 1, taken from Greenwood's map of the 1820s.⁶ Further scrutiny of twenty-six advertisements in Trewman's *Exeter Flying Post* which relate specifically to timber sales in and around the fertile valleys of the rivers Taw and Torridge, reveal a common concern, besides the naval aspect already referred to, for the relationship of the woodlands to any convenient means of transport. In some cases, it was simply noted that Barnstaple or Bideford were 'port towns', no doubt an incentive to potential exporters. In March 1808, of eleven lots offered by the Stevenstone Estate, near Great Torrington, six were 'conve-

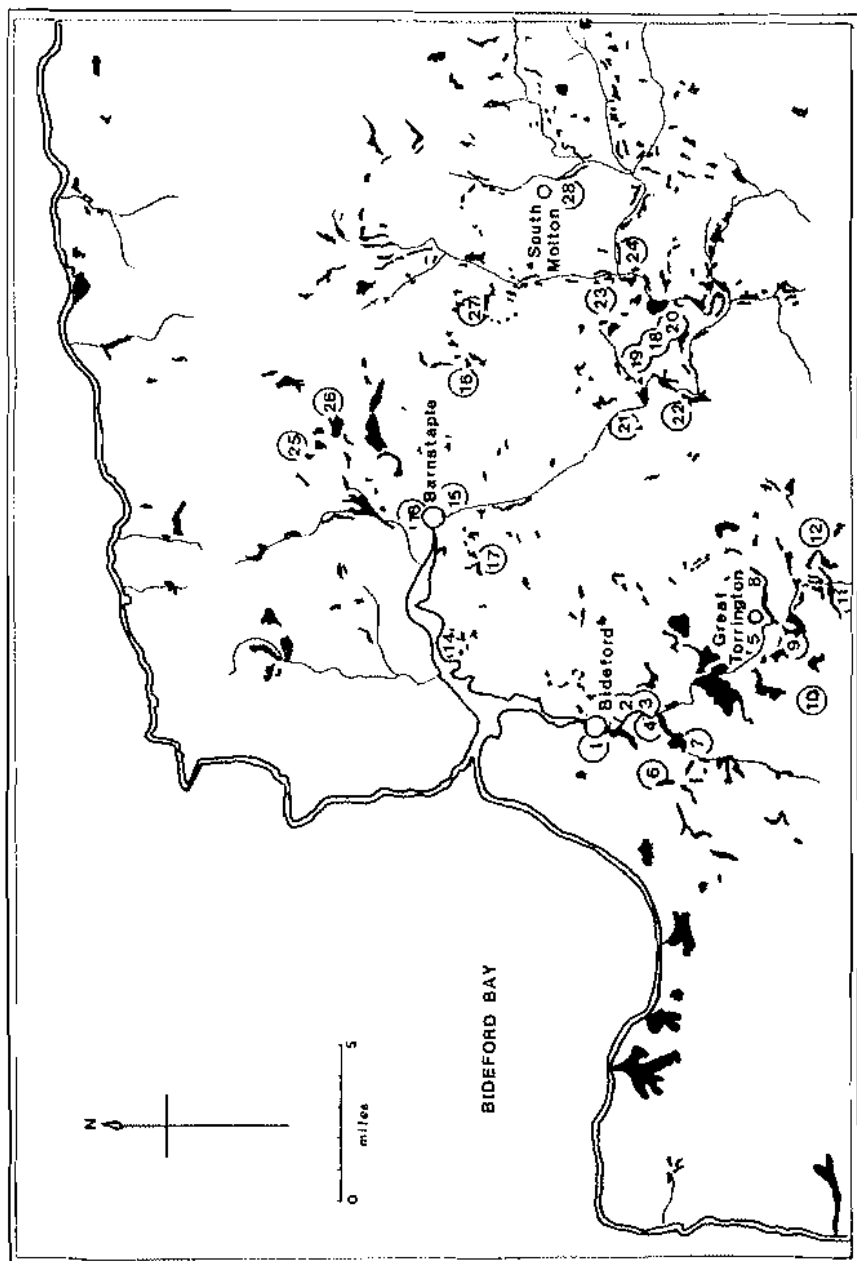


Figure 1. North Devon woodlands and the location of advertised timber sales between 1786 and 1923.

nient to Bideford' and five to the 'Barnstaple ports'. All were 'well worth the notice of shipbuilders, tanners, etc.'

Albion states that the haulage of timber was generally limited to a radius of fifteen to twenty miles from the coast, land transportation adding significantly to the overall costs. To reach the quays of Bideford and Barnstaple required dry ground for the heavy timber waggons and a system of roads capable of carrying them. One newspaper advertisement noted, in February 1809, that standing timber for sale in the parishes of South Molton and Filleigh was located only a quarter of a mile or so from the Barnstaple to South Molton turnpike. Access to the woodlands in the valleys of the Taw and the Torridge was considerably improved with road developments between Great Torrington and Bideford, completed in 1825, and the partial realignment of the Barnstaple-Exeter route five years later. Both broadly shadowed the courses of their respective rivers.

The two rivers were used for the transportation of timber although the navigation of the Taw was made more difficult by a tortuous and shallow channel. The deeper Torridge also had the advantage of a small quay, at Weare Giffard, up-river from Bideford and an area endowed with large tracts of woodland. An advertisement in March 1802 emphasised the 'easy distance' from this quay of saleable timber standing in or near the appropriately named St Giles-in-the-Wood.¹⁰ Twelve years after the completion of the Rolle Canal in 1827, an account for quay dues included a charge of £4 18s 6d for landage of 98 tons of wood and bark sold by Earl Fortescue. It was received by the merchant George Braginton of St Giles.¹¹ Another *Flying Post* advertisement stressed the location of timber on the 'edge of a navigable river' near Bideford.¹² Such timber could be rafted, the cause of a dispute on the Taw in 1604. Philip Bushen of Tiverton was accused of damaging weirs and banks at Tawstock, whilst floating timber from High Bickington to Barnstaple, a distance of ten miles. The former, it was alleged, 'ceased not to put his wood in the water'.¹³ Timber was also carried in rowing and sailing lighters or barges. As early as 1594, the Wardens of the Wood and Coal Stores for the 'poore of Barnstaple', expended 3s 4d for the travelling costs to purchase wood and to 'geate boats and lighters to bring the same home'.¹⁴

Although the twenty-six *Flying Post* advertisements studied represent only a part of the north Devon timber business, they do indicate distribution patterns and the role of various parishes in the trade (Table 1). The largest single sale was in February 1794 when over 3,500 trees were open to inspection at Pigslake Wood, about one mile-and-a-quarter from Barnstaple. This number was virtually equalled between 1805 and 1806 with three sales in the parish of Satterleigh. Four other parishes, Atherington, Chittlehampton, St Giles-in-the-Wood and Yarnscombe, were able to market more than 1,500 trees each, aggregating nearly 8,000 in all. Great Torrington, Weare Giffard, Monkleigh, Frithelstock and Beaford offered, at various times, a further 1000 to 1500 trees each.

Ninety per cent of approximately 29,500 trees in the sample were oak, seven per cent ash, two per cent fir and the remainder elm, lime, sycamore and beech. There was also a total of 106 acres of coppice, probably mostly oak. An 1839 valuation of 'timber, saplings, etc.' growing on the Fortescue estates at Meath, Bray Marsh, South Molton and Chittlehampton, prices oak at £6 per ton, ash at £4, elm at £3 10s, fir at £2 10s, lime, beech and sycamore at £2 and walnut and pollards at £1 10s.¹⁵ Taking into account periodic price fluctuations, these figures provide a broad-brush scale of value for the different types of timber available in north Devon. Gains made from the sale of

map ref	parish	Species and Number of Trees							coppice (acres)
		oak	ash	elm	beech	fir	sycamore	lime	
1	Bideford	160	195	50	-	-	-	-	8
2	Landcross	100	-	10	-	-	-	-	3
3	Weare Giffard	1400	-	-	-	-	-	-	12
4	Monkleigh	1425	10	10	-	-	-	-	-
5	Great Torrington	1400	-	(some)	-	-	-	-	-
6	Buckland Brewer	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	10
7	Frithelstock	1234	27	-	-	-	-	-	-
8	St Giles	1800	-	-	-	-	-	-	25
9	Little Torrington	650	5	-	-	-	-	-	11
10	Langtree	232	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
11	Merton	900	20	-	10	-	-	-	10
12	Beaford	<1336	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
13	Barnstaple	3000	500	40	-	-	-	-	-
14	Fremington	93	-	73	-	-	-	-	-
15	Bishop's Tawton	-	-	10	-	-	-	-	-
16	Swimbridge	622	38	-	-	-	-	-	-
17	Yarnscombe	1943	89	-	20	-	-	-	-
18	Chittlehampton/ Warkleigh	500	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
19	Chittlehampton	2325	110	-	30	-	-	-	-
20	Warkleigh	540	90	-	34	-	-	121	-
21	Atherington	1415	40	-	-	-	-	-	-
22	High Bickington	360	38	-	-	-	-	-	-
23	Satterleigh	2890	125	-	10	530	10	-	-
24	Kingsnympton	266	48	5	16	-	-	-	-
25	Arlington	921	211	-	-	-	-	-	9
26	Bratton Fleming	243	144	-	-	-	-	-	-
27	Filleigh/S. Molton	605	211	-	33	-	-	-	18
28	South Molton	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	(some)
	TOTAL	<26360	>1901	>198	153	530	10	121	>106

Table 1. Key to figure 1: the sale of trees in north Devon by parish and by species utilised in Trewman's Exeter Flying Post between 1786 and 1823.

a wood did not stop with the cutting down of the trees. An account for two acres of woodland felled at Brembridge Wood, to the north-east of Castle Hill, Filleigh, shows a profit of £4 18s 2d on 3,165 faggots, 789 posts, 84 stakes and 3 tons 2 hundredweight of oak bark. Labour costs amounted to a further £18 3s 4d.²⁰

North Devon shipbuilders, requiring long, straight pieces of timber for their vessels, were able to turn locally ground trees, the cost of which contributed to the relative cheapness of their products. In 1792, John Watkins of Bideford, thought it not

improper to remark ... that the building of ships is cheaper here than in any other part of England. The principal reason for this is, the great quantity of timber which is continuously cutting down in the neighbourhood.²¹

This, and low labour costs, gave an edge to north Devon shipbuilding and repair work, which continued into the nineteenth century. In 1880, for example, cheap materials and labour persuaded shipowners in Swansea to turn, for repairs, from their own yards to Appledore where up to one-third could be saved on costs.²²

Richard Chapman was one north Devon shipbuilder who purchased some timber locally. On the death of his shipbuilder father, Emmanuel, in the late 1770s, Chapman, still in his teens, took control of the yard at Cliff Houses, Northam, at one end of Orchard Hill. It was to become the most important in north Devon.²³ In May 1798 Chapman purchased 99 oak trees with 'tops and bark' from John Searles, the Steward to Lord Rolle of Stevenstone. The timber, standing on the estate at Beam near Great Torrington, was valued at £175, an average of about £1 15s per tree. Half the amount was paid before the trees were cut down and taken away. Almost a year later, in April 1799, Chapman contracted to buy a further 297 oaks at a total cost of £624 5s.²⁴ Both shipbuilder and steward dealt within a system common on large estates. Timber was open to inspection at a public survey which was overseen by the manorial steward. It was then cut down by the buyer after purchase.²⁵ To protect the remaining woodland, a covenant in the agreement between the two men stipulated that should any tree not included in the sale be cut down a 'penalty of 5s every foot of solid timber would be paid. Chapman's vessels were long-lasting if they survived the normal hazards of trade. The *Newton*, a 63 ton brigantine built in 1788, sailed for ninety years.²⁶ Another north Devon vessel, completed in 1829, was the *Lord Rolle*. She was launched up-river from Bideford bridge at William Hutchings yard at Annery, near Weare Giffard. One of the selling points in the sale advertisement of June 1884 was that she was built 'of the best materials, most of the timber being grown in Stevenstone Park.'²⁷

Not all the timber was utilised locally; some was exported. The *Flying Post's* shipping departure lists for the period July 1791 to June 1793 record twenty-nine cargoes and ten consignments of timber and planks exported from Barnstaple. The shipbuilding centre of Greenock, in Scotland, and Plymouth were the most significant importers of north Devon timber, receiving thirteen cargoes and nine consignments and five cargoes and three consignments respectively. Ilfracombe and Port Glasgow were also relatively important recipients, sharing five cargoes and three consignments between them. The remaining shipments were despatched to various ports in the south-west of England, Ireland and Scotland.

There are few references to the actual quantities of timber exported, although one source, Oliver Harris's 'tally book', provides a few insights in the mid-1770s.²⁸ Harris was a land-waiter in the Barnstaple customs service. As part of his job he maintained tallies of the amount of goods exported in various vessels for which he had a responsibility. One example of the amount of timber shipped from Barnstaple was the fifty

loads²⁵ of oak taken on board the *Endeavour* of Lymeington which was bound for Plymouth in July 1777. Another was the five tons of oak for Tenby, carried, probably as a consignment, in the *Blessing* of Barnstaple.

The timber trade with South Wales included oak poles which were used extensively in coal-mines. They were an inferior grade of timber, usually crooked and unsuited to any form of local constructional work. Harris's 'tally book' records, in 1777, three shipments of oak poles despatched to the mines of Pembrokeshire, through the ports of Pembroke and Tenby. They were sent by the dozen; fourteen in March and sixteen and ten in September.²⁶ Bideford and Barnstaple managed one cargo each to Tenby in the early 1790s, and, even when timber was in great demand generally, Bideford exported only four cargoes to the same port between August 1805 and September 1806.²⁷ When compared with the ports of Aberdyfi and Aberystwyth in west Wales, which shipped an average of forty-eight cargoes per year to Milford Haven between 1792 and 1794,²⁸ and the number of timber shipments from north Devon in general, the occasional cargo or consignment of poor grade oak poles throws into perspective the overall quality of wood available in the region.

However, it must not be presumed that all timber exported from north Devon was of local origin. Since timber had to be carried by sea as near to its ultimate destination as was possible to avoid the unnecessary costs of transshipment from large, deep-sea vessels into smaller craft, all English ports participated in the direct importation of foreign timber.²⁹ Some was redistributed via north Devon's coasting trade.

Evidence for this particular aspect of the trade is sketchy, but it is certain that some imported foreign timber was redistributed under the generic heading of 'sundry goods'. A few specific references to re-exports are made. At the beginning of 1777, for example, the *Exchange* of Barnstaple, was due to sail for Neath with deals, on which 'duty [was] paid here on importation'.³⁰ The ship's masts, despatched from Barnstaple to Bridgwater in the autumn of 1791, were probably imported from Riga. One shipment of staves, brought to Barnstaple in the *Rodney*, was ostensibly from the same place. They had actually been made in the United States and used as dunnage under a cargo of rice which was discharged at Hamburg, before the vessel sailed for Riga!³¹

Notes

- 1 Marshall, W., *The Rural Economy of the West of England*, 2 Vols., 1796, II, pp 47 sq.
- 2 Vancouver, C., *General View of the Agriculture of Devon*, 1808, pp 226 sqq.
- 3 *ibid*, pp 266, 457
- 4 Risdon, T., *Chorographical Description or Survey of the County of Devon*, 1811.
- 5 see Nix, M., 'The Timber Crisis of 1809 and the North Devon Shipbuilding Industry', in *The Devon Historian*, 49, pp 28, sqq., 1994.
- 6 Greenwood, C. and J., *Map of the County of Devon from an Actual Survey made in the Years 1825 and 1826, 1827*.
- 7 *Tretman's Exeter Flying Post* (TEFP), 10.3.1808.
- 8 Albion, R., *Forests and Sea Power: the Timber Crisis of the Royal Navy, 1652-1862*, 1926, p 103.
- 9 *TEFP*, 2.1809
- 10 *TEFP*, 4.3.1802
- 11 Devon Record Office (DRO), 1262M/E2/34
- 12 *TEFP*, 18.4.1799

- 13 Grant, A., 'Devon Shipping, Trade and Ports, 1600-1689', in *The New Maritime History of Devon*, I, p 134.
- 14 Grant, A., and Highes, B., *North Devon Barges*, 1975, p 11
- 15 DRO, 1262M/E4/27
- 16 DRO, 1262M/E4/22
- 17 Watkins, J., *An Essay Towards a History of Bideford in the County of Devon*, 1972, p76.
- 18 *Bideford Weekly Gazette*, 19.5.1885
- 19 Greenhill, B., and Giffard, A., *Westcountrymen in the Prince Edward's Isle: a Fragment of the Great Migration*, 1975 rep., p 20.
- 20 DRO, 96M/Box114/10
- 21 Harrison, G.V., 'The South-west: Dorset, Somerset, Devon and Cornwall', in Thirsk, J., ed., *The Agrarian History of England and Wales, VI, 1640-1750: Regional Farming Systems*, 1984, p 386.
- 22 Farr, G., *Shipbuilding in North Devon*, 1796, p 64.
- 23 *Bideford Weekly Gazette*, 10.6.1884. Stevenstone timber was much admired by Vancouver (see above). The Park was in close proximity to Great Torrington through which Maton had journeyed in the 1790s. The axe, he declared, had 'made much havoc' amongst the woodlands (Maton, G.W., *Observations Relative Chiefly to the Natural History, Picturesque Scenery and Antiquities of the Western Counties of England*, 2 Vols, 1797, II, p 52).
- 24 North Devon Athanaeum (NDA), Large Bankers Box, 2,3(i).
- 25 An arbitrary figure approximating 50 cubic feet, or 1 1/4 tons, or 1 ton of shipping.
- 26 NDA, Large Bankers Box, 2,3(i).
- 27 DRO R2379A/Z38/3
- 28 Hughes, M.E., 'The Historical Geography of the Sea-faring Industry of the Coast of Cardigan Bay during the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries', unpublished PhD thesis, University of Wales, 1962, p 138.
- 30 NDA, Large Bankers Box, 2,3(i)
- 31 Public Record Office, CUST 69/68, 4.4.1792.

TWO UNUSUAL DEVON SAINTS

Nicholas Orme

Devon is not, like Cornwall, a county of unusual saints. Although its name is that of a British people, the *Dumnonii*, it has very few churches linked with distinctive, local Celtic figures like those that are so common west of the Tamar. Only three Devon churches, in fact, are known to have had their own Celtic saint buried on the site: Braunton (St Brannoc), Chittlehampton (St Urith), and Hartland (St Nectan). Landkey preserves a Celtic church name; it means 'the church of thy Cai', a saint probably the same as the patron of Kea near Truro. Cheristow in Hartland once possessed a chapel of St Wenn, a saint who also owned dedications in Cornwall. Two other places in north Devon, Filleigh and Parracombe, which are sometimes said to enshrine the names of Celtic saints, can be discounted. The early forms of the name Filleigh suggest no connection with the Cornish St Fili, and Parracombe (*Pedrocomba* in Domesday Book, is unlikely to be 'Petroc's combe'. Saints' names are not usually combined with natural features in such kinds of place-names.'

There are, of course, a number of other Devon churches with dedications to Celtic saints, the evidence for which can be traced back before the Reformation and seems authentic. There are about fourteen to Petroc, excluding Harford, which should not be counted, and including Harford, which ought to be – these two places having been mixed up by the Victorian antiquary George Oliver. There are two to Bridget, two to David, two (outside Hartland) to Nectan, and one each to Kerrian, Nun and Winwaloe. But all these could have originated after the Saxon conquest of Devon, and in the case of the Petroc dedications almost certainly did: perhaps as late as the tenth or eleventh centuries. They are probably borrowings from the Celtic world as a result of the Saxon conquest of Cornwall (including Bodmin, St Petroc's main church) or through English trade-links with Ireland. As for Constantine, the patron saint of Milton Abbot, and Helen, the patron of Abbotsham and Lundy, they are as likely to be the Emperor Constantine and his mother Helen as they are to be the Celtic saints who possessed similar names.

Most of the churches in Devon whose patron saints have been recorded before the Reformation (which is only about 60 per cent of the total) were dedicated to Biblical, European or Saxon saints. The most popular choices were Mary, Peter, Andrew and Michael. In other parts of England there were local Saxon saints, but Devon has traditionally been regarded as having only one of these – Sidwell of Exeter – a figure so shadowy that it has been suggested that she too was Celtic and perhaps identical with the Sitofolla, who appears in a Breton saint's life of the ninth century.¹ If she was Saxon, as the much later legends about her suggest, she lived at some time between the late 600s, when the English are first mentioned living in Exeter, and the 1000s when she is first recorded in documents.² Two other Devonians were venerated as saints in the later middle ages: Bishop Berkeley of Exeter (d. 1327) and his successor Bishop Lacy (d. 1455), but neither of these was formally canonised or had a church, chapel or altar named after him.³

The list of distinctive Devon saints – Celtic or Saxon – is thus a small one, but it is possible to add two further names to it, neither of which is well known in writings about the county. We begin on the north coast at Instow, a place first recorded in

Domesday Book as *Johannestota*, meaning the 'stow' or holy place of John. There are several similar place-names in Devon and Cornwall, such as Christow, Jacobstow and Marystow: usually named after a Biblical or European saint, but on at least one occasion (Padstow) after a Celtic one (Petroc). We do not know whether the John of Instow was originally the Baptist, the Evangelist or a different John altogether, but it appears that in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries he was regarded as a local and Celtic saint. In the Life of St Nectan, composed at Hartland or for its clergy in the twelfth century, Nectan is said to have been one of the twenty-four children of the Welsh king Brychan. The names of the other twenty-three are given, and John occurs as the second, after Nectan himself. When I published a study of this list of the children of Brychan in 1992, I discounted the possibility that John was John of Instow. I had seen the theory proposed in print, but it had not been supported by evidence. That evidence exists, but it is very little known, and is to be found in a list of English saints and their resting places copied by the famous Tudor antiquary, John Leland, in about 1540. Annoyingly for us, Leland identified his source merely as a *libellus* (little book), but as the places in the list begin with Glastonbury and continue with other churches in the west of England, the book may well have come from that abbey. The material relevant to us is as follows, translating from the original Latin:

From a little book of places where saints rest in England:

King Edgar is honourably laid at Glastonbury in a silver chest.

In a certain village which is called Haselbury, St Wulfic.

In *Branctona* [Braunton] lies St Brannoc, a man famous for miracles.

In a certain town near the River *Thorich* [Torrifidge] lies the blessed martyr John who, having been beheaded on one side of the river, made his way with his head in his arms across the river, which is asserted to have a wide space between its banks, and placed it [his head] on the other bank, and in each place there is a church in his honour.

In the village which is called Chittlehampton lies St Hyeritha the virgin.

In the town which is called *Mudwennestow* lies St *Mudwenna*.

The relics of the Blessed Abbess Hilda in the monastery at Glastonbury.⁴

The rest of the list is concerned with other parts of England. The only clues to the date lie in the place-names. *Branctona* is spelt in this way in the late eleventh century and the River Torridge is not spelt with a 'Th' after the thirteenth, which suggests a rough chronological origin between 1086 and 1300.⁵ *Mudwenna* and *Mudwennestow* look like alterations of Morwenna and Morwenstow, on the assumption that Morwenna was the different Saxon saint Modwenna.

The list, then, describes a local saint called John who was beheaded and afterwards carried his head – as indeed did Nectan of Hartland. He was buried in a church near the River Torridge, opposite a church on the other side of the river which was also dedicated to him. Instow is by the Torridge, it is the only church in the area known to have been dedicated to a St John before the Reformation, and it lies against Appledore where a chapel of St John (not identified as the Baptist or Evangelist) was licensed for worship by the bishop of Exeter in 1400.⁶ If the Appledore chapel was new at that date, a difficulty would arise about the dating of Leland's document, but there are other cases where ancient chapels were given licences for worship by late-medieval bishops, so we can allow the possibility that this building was older. Another reason for dating Leland's evidence earlier rather than later is that, by the last quarter of the fifteenth century, Instow church was regarded as being dedicated to St John the Baptist, and

there are no less than three references to this in contemporary records between 1476 and 1501.⁷ We are therefore left with a complex story. Instow was dedicated by 1086 to a St John, identity now unknown. By the twelfth or thirteenth centuries the saint was regarded as a distinct local saint – Welsh brother of Neotan in one version, head-carrying martyr in another. But these traditions were not strong ones. By the late fifteenth century, the saint of the church was regarded as the Baptist, leaving us to wonder why the earlier legend (presumably supported by evidence of a shrine or grave) had disappeared.

Our other unusual saint comes from the south coast and from Stoke Fleming, the parish immediately west of Dartmouth. Nowadays, its parish church is considered to be dedicated to St Peter, but the earlier reference to this is no older than 1742.⁸ It belongs to a large category of cases in Devon where the original patron saint of the church was forgotten after the Reformation and a new one was invented when, in the reign of George II, antiquaries started enquiring about patron saints. In this instance, Peter was probably suggested on the grounds that a local fair or feast day was held on St Peter's Day. There are, however, two earlier references to the patron saint of Stoke Fleming. One, in an 'inquisition post mortem' (enquiry into the property of a dead landholder) in 1364 names the saint as *Ermond*.⁹ The other, in the register of the bishop of Exeter in 1419, calls him *Ermund*.¹⁰ Hitherto, no one seems to have put these two pieces of evidence together to declare unequivocally that Stoke Fleming was dedicated to a distinct St Ermund (or Ermond), so let us now do so!

Who was St Ermund? No such saint appears to be known in England: in medieval calendars of saints' days, lists of saints' resting places, or modern dictionaries of saints. The *Acta Sanctorum* – the great Catholic dictionary of saints which was begun in the seventeenth century and is still not quite complete – mentions a very obscure German saint *Irmund* at Julich in the Rhineland, who is said to have lived in the fifth century, and a Belgian saint *Ermin* who died in AD737.¹¹ It is possible that a relic of one of these saints was given to Stoke Fleming church, which lies close to a port and once belonged to a family called Fleming, but it would be unwise to press the point without more evidence. The name seems to have existed in Saxon England, because there was once a place called *Earmundesteah* in Bessels Leigh (formerly Berkshire, now Oxfordshire).¹² He may have been the unique local saint of Stoke Fleming, buried and venerated only there, though it is odd, if so, that his shrine and cult have left so little trace in antiquarian writings or folklore.

There is one other curious piece of evidence about the South Hams which may be relevant. Not far from Stoke Fleming lies Stokenham, historically a chief place of the area: the meeting place of the hundred in which Stoke Fleming lies, and the church of a large parish with dependent chapels which looks as if it was once a major Saxon church or minster. The only medieval reference to the dedication of Stokenham church occurs in 1343, when the patron saint was named as Humbert the Confessor.¹³ There were two holy men of this name – Humbert of Savoy (d. 1188) and Humbert of Romans (d. 1277) – but neither was widely venerated in England. Neither can have been the original patron of this much older church, and it is difficult to imagine either of them being added to (or replacing) the original patron saint. Despite Instow, the overwhelming evidence in Devon is that churches stayed faithful to their patron saints in the middle ages, rather than changing them. Is Humbert, then, a rationalisation or readaptation of an obscure Saxon saint – a distinct saint of Stokenham or even Ermund of Stoke Fleming? Here again, more information would be welcome; unfortunately, south Devon

was not a region much known or visited by early antiquaries. There may have been local saints of whom we know nothing, or they may have been imported from overseas. At any rate Ermund – however obscure – deserved to be remembered at Stoke Fleming, and it would be good if he could be restored as its patron, at least alongside Peter. This would give Stoke Fleming a distinction shared by no other English church, as far as I know.

References

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- 2 Lynette Olson, *Early Monasteries in Cornwall* (Woodbridge, 1989), pp 20-6.
- 3 On Sidwell, see Nicholas Roscarrock's *Lives of the Saints: Cornwall and Devon*, ed. Nicholas Orme, Devon and Cornwall Record Society, new series xxv (1992), pp 170-2.
- 4 On these men, see Nicholas Orme, 'Two Saint-Bishops of Exeter', *Analecta Bollandiana* civ (1986), pp 403-18.
- 5 Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Top. Gen. c.2, p 369, printed in John Leland, *De Rebus Britannicis Collectanea*, 2nd ed., 6 vols. (London, 1770), iii, 408-9.
- 6 *Place-Names of Devon*, i, 14, 32.
- 7 *The Register of Edmund Stafford*, ed. F.C. Hingeston-Randolph (London and Exeter, 1886), p 249.
- 8 Exeter, Devon Record Office, Chanter XII (ii), f. 38v; *Calendar of Inquisitions Post Mortem, Henry VII*, i, 64; Devon Record Office, Chanter XII (ii), Redmayn f. 22v.
- 9 J. Ecton, *Thesaurus Rerum Ecclesiasticarum* (London, 1742), p 151.
- 10 *Calendar of Inquisitions Post Mortem*, xi, 470.
- 11 Devon Record Office, Chanter IX (The Register of Bishop Stafford), f. 202.
- 12 *Acta Sanctorum*, January, vol. ii (Antwerp, 1643), pp 842-3; April, vol. iii (Antwerp, 1675), pp 324-7.
- 13 Margaret Gelling, *The Place-Names of Berkshire* part ii, English Place-Name Society, 1 (1974), pp 443-4; information kindly supplied by Dr W.J. Blair of The Queen's College Oxford.
- 14 *Calendar of Inquisitions Post Mortem*, viii, 347-8.

DEANCOMBE: A DARTMOOR FARM

Paul Rendell

The building of Burrator Reservoir affected over twenty dwellings within the catchment area which includes the valleys of the Meavy, Deancombe, and Newlycombe. Burrator Reservoir was built between 1893 and 1898 as a water supply for Plymouth.

One of the buildings to be affected was Deancombe (SX 580687). This is a very old farmstead and in 1317 the moor people called the valley 'Dencomb', but there was no mention of a farm.¹ The first mention was apparently in 1450, when John Shullabere of Dencomb coined 248lb of tin at Plympton.² Plympton was a stannary town at which tax on tin had to be paid to the king. In the account of the forester of the west quarter of Dartmoor in the 1490s, the 'vill of Dennecumbe in the parish of Walkhampton' is recorded as paying a venville rent of 1s 6d. This seems to imply that there was more than one farm there. In 1506 'Dennecumbe' is again described in the forester's accounts.³

John Windicate the younger was a tinner at East Deancombe in 1577. In 1582 John Windiate the elder, also a tinner, conveyed one sixth part of a tinwork to Edward Mander.⁴ John died within the next two years and his widow, Alice, took over the tenement called 'Dencombe'. In 1585 John Windicate the younger was at East Dencombe, while Robert Cockle lived at West Dencombe.⁵ In 1611 the Windiates of Deancombe and the nearby farm of Middleworth were granted shares in thirty-nine tinworks including at Deancombe Lane, Deancombe Land, Reddapl (on the Meavy River), Keglesburrow, (also near the River Meavy) and Cramberplena (possibly on Cramber Down).⁶ So it seems that farmers were involved in tin works as well as working on the land.

There is a big jump to the next record of Deancombe, to 1797, when Roger Atwill of Willtown, now Welltown, in the parish of Walkhampton, bequeathed to Elias Giles senior an estate called Deancombe. When Elias Giles died it was given to his son, Elias Giles.⁷ In 1801 the ledgers of the Manor of Walkhampton put John King at West Deancombe paying an annual rent of 7s 6d, and the tax was £1 4s.⁸ In 1804 Ann King, the wife of John, died and he had no interest in West Deancombe so the property was handed over to William Creber who stayed there until 1810.

At East Deancombe in 1810 John Northmore paid yearly rent of 6s 2d, with land tax of 1s. He also rented part of West Deancombe for the same amount. A chamber barn with a shippen was built in 1838 at East Deancombe. George Giles, the land agent for Maristow Estate wrote to Richard Andrew of East Deancombe to tell him that tenders were out for his new building.⁹

Thomas Fairweather and Henry Bradridge were living at West Deancombe in 1840 and on 10 March of that year they were repairing many of the ancient hedges, as George Giles noted when he paid them a visit. In 1849 another property was handed over to the Maristow Estate, following the death, on 4 February 1849, of Richard Creber of Outhome, across the valley, at the age of eighty-two. The estate was not believed to be very valuable, worth only about £20. For many years it was intended that this property would be handed over to Deancombe, and this was done in September 1849, when George French was at Deancombe. The letters do not mention which Deancombe, west or east, so maybe there was only one farm by then.¹⁰ Kelly's

Directory puts John Jackman there in 1866, Richard Rouse in 1873, John Creber in 1883, and George Pengelly in 1883 until 1892. George Hamlyn and George Hamlyn junior were in occupation until about 1909, when George junior left and George senior continued living there until the final abandonment between 1910 and 1914.

At this time Sir Henry Lopes sold land and farms to Plymouth Corporation Water Works (PCWW), including Deancombe. During the latter part of the first world war three soldiers were stationed at Middleworth Farm and were asked by PCWW to plant and harvest potatoes. Horses belonging to PCWW were used for ploughing, and the fields at Middleworth and Deancombe were planted. Gaydon was the ploughman, Copper the carter, and Davis the cook. It is believed that only one crop was planted and harvested.¹¹

In 1985 Deancombe Farm and some of the fields were used for a film called *Revolution* based on the American Civil War.¹² Today the farms lie in ruins and their history is becoming forgotten.

References:

- 1 Gover et al, *The Place Names of Devon*, 1931, 245.
- 2 Sites & Monuments Register, Exeter.
- 3 Worth, *Dartmoor*, 1967, 344.
- 4 Newman, Philip; *Tinners and Tenants on South West Dartmoor*. Unpublished, 1992.
- 5 West Devon Record Office (WDR0) 70/74.
- 6 Devon Record Office DD2688
- 7 WDR0 174/2
- 8 WDR0 Ledgers of Walkhampton
- 9 WDR0 Maristow Estate Agent book.
- 10 Hilda Piper, *Dousland Pers. Com.* 1989.
- 11 Author was an extra in the film.

DEVON LANDSCAPE ARTIST: WILLIAM TRAIES

Bill Ransom

William Traies was born at Crediton in 1789 and from an early age decided to be an artist. His desire and his talent were recognized and encouraged by the Reverend Gayer Patch, vicar of St Leonard's in Exeter, who was a nephew of the artist Thomas Patch and the owner of a fine collection of water-colours.¹ It was the Reverend Patch who introduced Traies to Joseph Farington R.A., landscape artist and diarist. Farington records in his diary for 23 November 1810 his meeting with Traies, (spelt incorrectly as Traile in the diary), 'After tea a young man of the name of Traile came it being the wish of Mr Patch that I should see him as his mind is bent upon being an artist. I looked at a few of his attempts at drawing and found he had everything to learn; but his resolution seemed to be fixed. He told me he was twenty one years old, and at present employed as Clerk to a manufacturer. A correspondence which he keeps up with a young man of the name of Passmore who is now painting at the British Institution seemed to have a great effect in increasing his desire to proceed in the same way. I remarked that he had but one eye but was informed it was not due to any weakness in those parts but that he was born so, and saw well with the other.'

At an early stage in his life, presumably following his post with the manufacturer, Traies became an employee of the Post Office, at first in Exeter. Here he became friendly with John Gendall and the two used to go sketching together. It has been stated that Traies 'began the practice of drawing as the illustrator of a book on natural history by a Dr Neal' but attempts to identify this book have been unsuccessful.² Patch also introduced him to the Reverend Palk Carrington, rector of Bridford. According to Pycroft,³ Traies and Carrington were kindred spirits. For many years Traies spent his autumn at the Rectory and both sketched scenes in Bridford Wood and the neighbourhood including one by Traies 'The Gipsy Encampment' which apparently became famous.

His first known exhibited work was at the Royal Academy in 1817 simply called 'Landscape' (No.100) and his address was given as 'At Mr Hooper's 32, Marylebone St., Golden Square, London.' By 1822 he was back in Exeter at the Friary. Two paintings were shown at the Royal Academy that year 'Sunset, Sketch from Nature' (No. 82) and the first painting explicitly of Devonshire, 'Waterfall on the Teign, near Lustleigh, Devon'. It was another twenty-three years before his only other exhibit at the Academy appeared: like the first this was simply entitled 'Landscape' (No. 1212). In this interval, however, he was not idle and many pictures were bought by local patrons, in particular Captain Parker of Whiteway House, Chudleigh, the father of the Member of Parliament for South Devon, by Mr Robert Saunders of Bedford Circus, Exeter, by Mr Kendall and by Mr Miles. Traies spent long periods at Whiteway House and had a studio there where he drew and painted local scenes. One room at Whiteway House was especially devoted to works by Traies. Mr Saunders was one of the artist's most enthusiastic patrons and, we are informed, was always impatient to receive a new painting and valued them highly. *The Exeter Flying Post*⁴ records that Mr Saunders 'has recently refused an offer of 100 guineas made by the picture dealer Daniel Pennell for a brilliant specimen of Traies in the style of Claude'. The collection of Mr Kendall, a solicitor and talented member of Exeter literary society, numbered at least fifty pictures attributed to Canaletto, Vernet, Rembrandt, Vandyke and other old masters into whose company

paintings by Traies were also admitted.⁵ Mr William Miles was both a patron and a friend to Traies and often tried to persuade him to exhibit in London but apart from the four works mentioned Traies was essentially a local exhibitor.

He had works shown at Exeter from 1822⁶ to 1824 and again in 1845 and 1846 and at Plymouth in 1839⁷. A review of the exhibition held in Exeter in October 1822 states 'Traies Bellemarsh Hill is a fine specimen of harmony in colouring and delicacy of pencilling and displays a wonderful improvement in this young artist who seems unconscious of his own merit'. In the 1823 exhibition at the Devon and Exeter Subscription Rooms Traies showed 'Scene on the Dart' (No. 213) and in the following year was included as 'among the most eminent of the moderns'.⁸

On 19 April 1825 he married Maria Richards, daughter of John Downman, at Holy Trinity Church, Exeter and subsequently had three sons.⁹ One of these sons became an artist – also of considerable local repute who unfortunately died young before, perhaps, his full ability had been reached.

In the 1845 exhibition held under the auspices of the Devon and Exeter Society for the study and encouragement of Art Traies showed a scene in Perthshire (No.13) and 'Landscape South Devon' (No. 176). A review of this latter picture stated 'No. 176 is a landscape (South Devon) by W. Traies and shows his intimate acquaintance with, as also the peculiar relish this artist has, for the beauties of quiet nature. The objects introduced are suitable and striking effect is produced by a judicious distribution of light and shade'.¹⁰ He exhibited two pictures the following year but these met with some criticism from the reviewer to the *Art Journal* who wrote 'The veteran Devonian artist Traies has sent two landscapes, numbers 60 and 130. They are sylvan scenes and treated somewhat in the manner of Ruysdael: his distances are charming and his composition agreeable. It is to be regretted that his love of the verdurous should be so great. This colour is cast over his works like a green veil of a coat of Devon damp: the blue rivers are greener than salt waves. Again his works savour too much of the closet, not to say midnight lamp. We lack the daylight variety and freshness of out-of-door nature, where study offers the only security against mannerism and conventionality'.¹¹

In 1847 the reviewer of the *Exeter Flying Post* said of the third exhibition of the Devon and Exeter Society 'We are sorry to find nothing of our townsman Traies although we have several good things from his son'.¹² Indeed, Traies did not seem to exhibit widely, possibly because his paintings were sold readily without the need to do so. However, like many an artist his fame was not achieved quickly as is clearly seen from correspondence by his advocates to the local press at the time. Thus *The Western Times* for 26 July 1834 publishes a poem by J. Johns of Crediton headed 'On Visiting Mr Traie's Pictures in Magdalen Street' which deals with neglected talent and extols the virtues of the paintings. Doubtless the poet meant well by his once fellow-townsmen but to counteract any undue emphasis on neglect the assertion was refuted in the issue of 9 August¹³ which nevertheless admitted that while Traies was not in affluent circumstances 'yet for honour and credit of his county it may also be said that his merits are known and appreciated'.

In 1842 Traies was again the subject of some slight controversy in the local press regarding the extent of his role as teacher of another Devonshire artist William Spreat. *The Western Luminary*^{14,15} in that year records some difference of opinion between the two artists but it seems established that between October 1838 and April 1839 Spreat received some sixty lessons from Traies.

As Grant¹⁶ notes, the county houses of Devon held most of the paintings by Traies.



Bridford Mill. William Traies (1789 - 1872) (Oil on Canvas) Royal Albert Memorial Museum, Exeter.

Some were exhibited in March and April of 1886 in connection with the local school of art in Teignmouth and reported in the *Transactions of the Devonshire Association* for that year.¹⁰ The exhibition included 'On the Teign' and 'From Woodbury Common', (both lent by a Mrs Parsons). The former is possibly the painting referred to by Grant as a companion to the picture of the same name illustrated in his book. The description of 'On the Teign' shown at Teignmouth notes 'A favourable example of the artist's work presenting his usual characteristics. The scene chosen is one on the upper waters of the Teign near Chagford. A piece of smooth water in the centre; a solitary countryman in blue dress and with rod and line on the bank to right, trees on the opposite bank to the left. A church tower and wooded trees in the middle distance with blue hill beyond, and an evening light over the sky and fleecy clouds. The review of the Woodbury Common picture underlines the quiet, peaceful nature of Traies landscapes and states 'A good example of this artist's quiet manner, showing the mouth of the Exe, and a long stretch of the coast-line from Exmouth to Berry Head, with a calm sea under a summer evening light. In the foreground trees to right and left, with a road and two figures in the centre. The scene is repeated in a picture belonging to Mr Lionel Roberts of 32, Southernhay, Exeter'

Not all reviews of the artistry of Traies were quite so favourable as we have seen¹¹ and his foliage has sometimes been criticised as heavy. Grant¹² will have none of this and points to 'pictures by Traies in which there is no more of his beautiful green than Devon loves to show; in which the foliage is not heavy, but as light as the plumes of an osprey; in which Nature has been lovingly studied and deliciously reproduced, not by the light of "the closet", but from a nook in the dreamy, shadowy hush of a summer afternoon in the valley of the Teign, that which the globe has not to offer a period and a place more near to Heaven'. Poetic, if somewhat fulsome praise indeed!

In his time Traies was called the 'Devonshire Claude' and the paintings I have viewed in the Exeter and Plymouth Museums and the Devonshire Institution do have some of the idealistic qualities of the Frenchman. In his depiction of ravines and waterfalls he has also been compared to Ruysdael but there is no reason to suppose that he painted consciously in those styles or, indeed, in that of Richard Wilson to which style, to me, there is also a similarity. The Devon landscape he painted was not strictly topographical and was given a romantic and a classical appeal by atmosphere and composition.

An exhibition of works by early Devon painters born before the year 1800 was held between 14 July and 10 September 1932 at the Royal Albert Memorial Museum, Exeter, the exhibition being opened by Lord Conway of Allington. A review in *Apollo*²⁰ states 'We may close with a recognition of two surprisingly advanced painters of landscape for their time, William Traies and John Gendall who became fast friends ... The two painters used to roam the countryside sketching in company. In both a deeply rooted love of Nature is manifest, and in them, as Mr Percy Moore Turner says in his excellent introduction were welded the traditions of Classicism and Romanticism at the moment when these two forces came into direct conflict, and they profited to the maximum from both'. The exhibition embraced eight works by Traies of Devon views and a further seven not specifically stated as being of that county. The Devon views were 'A Devonshire Stream' (No. 8), 'Exeter from the Canal', (No. 11), 'The Lime Kilns near Topsham on the Exe', (No. 25), 'A Devonshire Farm', (No. 30), 'The Mouth of the Exe from Woodbury Common', (No. 36), 'Whiteway', (No. 38), 'Bridford Mill', (No. 51), and 'Babbacombe Beach near Torquay', (No. 68). Numbers 25 and 51 are now in the perma-

ment collection of the Royal Albert Memorial Museum which also contains a further twelve pictures by Traies. The Plymouth Museum and Art Gallery also has five pictures by Traies two of which are specifically of Devon.

William Traies died at his residence, Parker's Well Cottage, Topsham Road, Exeter on 23 April 1872.

Notes and References

- 1 Royal Albert Memorial Museum. John Gendall (1789-1865), 'Exeter's Forgotten Artist', 11 July to 16 October, 1979, (exhibition), Exeter Museum's Publication No. 97.
- 2 *Athenaeum* 11 May 1872.
- 3 Pycroft went a little further than the journal *Athenaeum* by remarking that Dr Neal was a Scotch physician. There would seem to be a case that this was Dr Adam Neale (sic) a Scots physician who qualified as a doctor of medicine in 1802 and resided in Exeter around 1814-20. Neale had subscribed one guinea on 17 January 1818 towards the foundation of the Exeter Dispensary for the indigent sick of the City and County of Exeter and became an honorary physician to the Dispensary later that year, (Russell P.M.G. *A History of the Exeter Hospitals 1170-1948*, p92/3). He would have known John Patch, a contemporaneous surgeon to the dispensary who was a cousin of the Reverend Gayer Patch. The Roll of the Royal College of Physicians of London compiled by William Munk, vol 3 1801-1825 shows, under the year 1806, an entry for Dr Adam Neale listing three works published in 1804, 1821 and 1828. However, none of these contains illustrations by Traies. I have been unable to trace any other physician 'Neal' or 'Neale' residing in Devon in the early nineteenth century.
- 4 Pycroft G. *Art in Devonshire*, Henry S. Eland, Exeter 1883.
- 5 *Exeter Flying Post* 18 June 1840 3a.
- 6 Royal Albert Memorial Museum. op. cit.
- 7 The first Exeter Art Exhibition was opened on 16 October 1821 at the Devon and Exeter Subscription Rooms. The exhibition arose from the initiative of Charles Cole, a carver and gilder, who had a shop at 270, High St, Exeter and at which shop exhibits were taken in (*Exeter Flying Post* 11 October 1821, 4c). The Subscription Rooms were built by a Thomas Cole. A line engraving by J. F. Lambert after W.H. Bartlett published in 1830 by Fisher, Son and Co. London shows the Rooms together with an adjacent New London Inn. An examination of this print and maps of old Exeter by P.D. Thomas (1977) from the ISCA collection held in the West Country Studies Library, Exeter shows the Rooms to have been at the junction of Longbrook St., with Northernhay Place-about where Messrs. Boots are today. Whether Traies exhibited at this first 1821 exhibition is not known.
- 8 Smiles S.A. 'Plymouth and Exeter as Centres of Art 1820-1865'. Doctoral thesis, University of Cambridge 1981.
- 9 *Exeter Flying Post* 17 October 1822 4b.
- 10 *Exeter Flying Post* 12 August 1824 4b.
- 11 The Marriage and Baptism registers of Holy Trinity Church, Exeter, now held at the Devon Record Office, show William Traies as marrying Maria Richards Downman on 19 April 1825. Subsequently three sons were baptised as follows:
 1. William Hugh Downman Traies 10 February 1827 (abode Holloway St, Exeter).
 2. John Francis Traies 1 January 1829 (abode Magdalen St, Exeter).

3. Henry Bradford Traies 2 June 1835 (abode Magdalen St, Exeter).

All references to the artist son state that he was the second son, give his birth as 1826 and his name to be Frank, Frank D. or Frank Downman. It is not difficult to equate the name of John Francis with the foregoing but not the birth date of 1826. John Francis must, surely, have been born in 1828.

- 12 *Exeter Flying Post* 11 September 1845 3d.
- 13 *Art Journal* 1846 p311. Exhibit No. 60 was entitled 'On the Okement' and may have been the picture of the same name measuring 8in x 10 $\frac{1}{4}$ in, oil on millboard, which now hangs on the Great Staircase at the Victoria and Albert Museum in London.
- 14 *Exeter Flying post* 26 August 1847 3a.
- 15 *Western Times* 9 August 1854 3a.
- 16 *Western Luminary* 1 November 1842 2c.
- 17 *Western Luminary* 15 November 1842 1d.
- 18 Grant M.H. *A Chronological History of Old English Landscape Painters*. F. Lewis Leigh-on-Sea 1961.
- 19 *Transactions of the Devonshire Association* 1886 p130, 133.
- 20 *Apollo* Vol. 16 1932 p125-7.

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The Librarian, Natural History Museum, London.

West Country Studies Library, Exeter.

The picture of Bridford Mill is published by permission of Miss Baker for the Royal Albert Memorial Museum.

ROGER HOPKINS, CIVIL ENGINEER 1775-1847

Keith S. Perkins

'In the general march of affairs, good roads, railways, canals &c, mark the progress of a country towards wealth and prosperity, and wherever they have been executed in a district not already abounding in wealth, they have invariably directed the flow of riches towards it.'

(Roger Hopkins, civil engineer - Oliver's Hotel, Bodmin 3 Oct. 1834)

★ ★ ★

Roger Hopkins of Swansea, Plymouth and Bath, Civil Engineer, completed the construction of the Teignmouth and Shaldon Road Bridge, south Devon in June 1827. His membership as Corresponding Member of the Institution of Civil Engineers was approved by Thomas Telford and others on 13 February 1827; and, although the Teignmouth and Shaldon Bridge is undoubtedly the work for which Hopkins is best known, his skills as a tramroad and railway engineer were as equally in great demand in the Westcountry as in south Wales.¹

Roger Hopkins, from Llangyfelach in the Swansea Valley, constructed in the early years of the nineteenth century the tramroad between Pen-y-darren and Abercynon in south Wales upon which, in 1804, Richard Trevithick tried the first railway locomotive steam engine.² In 1806, Hopkins married Mary Harris, daughter of the Reverend R. Harris of Pwllheli, Caernarvonshire, at St Mary's Church, Swansea.³ On 27 November of that same year, Hopkins became trustee to the Baptist Meeting House of the Swansea General Baptist Church (est 1758).

A strongly religious man, he was always able to express his beliefs as part and parcel of everyday life. The Hopkins' family motto was 'Heb Dduw, heb Ddim. Duw a Digon', which means 'Without God, without anything. With God with all.'

After Pen-y-darren, Hopkins was, in 1810, engaged as engineer on the Monmouth Railway, which was built partly through the Forest of Dean and opened in 1812.⁴ This engagement was almost certainly through the good offices of his associate and friend, David Mushet,⁵ the eminent Scottish metallurgist and ironmaster, discoverer of the Scottish blackband ironstone, who was then at Coleford in Gloucestershire. Mushet was reminded years later (1845) by a letter from Hopkins, of '... the numerous instances in which you had been kindly serviceable to me during that period ... when we were engaged together on the railways. In these concerns you promoted my interests.'

In 1814 Hopkins entered Devon – perhaps for the first time – at Bideford, called there by John, Lord Rolle of Stevenstone House, Torrington, and William Tardrew Esq. Together they were engaged in planning a tramroad or railway to start within two miles of Bideford and to extend along the River Torridge towards Great Torrington and the interior of the county. This would, so it was said, add considerably to the trade then carried on between south Wales and Bideford, especially in the supply of coal, culm and limestone. 'This desirable work is now marking out by, and under the able direction of, Mr Roger Hopkins, engineer of Swansea'.⁶ The project came to nothing however, but, as we shall see, it was revived some years later by promoters of the Bideford and

Okehampton Railway.

In 1821 the Plymouth and Dartmoor Railway, brainchild of Sir Thomas Tyrwhitt, was in serious constructional difficulty. It was realised, too late, that the engineer William Stuart – whom the Company had, with Admiralty consent 'borrowed' part-time from the Plymouth Breakwater undertaking – was, in fact, building them a railway that was impracticable (i.e. the gradients were too steep). The company searched around desperately for 'an engineer practically acquainted with railways', setting their sights finally upon Roger Hopkins who had, in 1811, carried out remedial work on the Severn and Wye Railway⁷ during its construction. In the event, Hopkins was sent off to Parliament and successfully guided through a new Bill raised to vary part of the Plymouth and Dartmoor Railway and to amend Acts already passed. Royal Assent was obtained on 2 July 1821, allowing Hopkins to complete the railway, which opened on 26 September 1823.⁸

Even before the conclusion of his engagement with the Plymouth and Dartmoor Railway Company, Roger Hopkins' influence in Devon had gained momentum. At Teignmouth in 1823 he became involved with George Templer, chairman of the committee set up to promote the building of a bridge over the Teign estuary. He made a model of a wooden bridge which, almost certainly, was the intended design for Teignmouth. At Laira in Plymouth Lord Morley of Saltram – who was planning to erect a suspension bridge over the Plym estuary – was urged by Sir William Elford (Recorder of Plymouth) to build a wooden bridge instead. So, having been influenced by Hopkins' design for Teignmouth, Morley directed his own engineer – James Meadows Rendel, to attend a meeting of the Modbury Turnpike Trust at Yealmspton concerning the proposed alterations in plans for Laira Bridge, on the plans of Roger Hopkins. For five days in November both Hopkins and Rendel were engaged together at Laira, ascertaining the practicability of building there a bridge of wooden construction.

Temporarily drawn away to London in 1824 to assist in the preparation of an estimate and tender to supply Dartmoor granite for the whole construction of John Rennie's London Bridge, Hopkins also used this period to finalise his design for the Teignmouth and Shaldon Bridge.

Finally, on 9 June 1824, Acts for bridges at Teignmouth and Laira were obtained, although at Laira a late design for a cast iron bridge by Rendel, instead of a wooden one, was approved. Three years later, in 1827, the two bridges were opened to the general public.⁹

By now (1827) the Hopkins family were well established in Plymouth at 5 Brunswick Terrace, where Roger lived with his wife Mary and three sons: Rice, Thomas and Evan. Both Rice and Thomas would in the years ahead become Members of the Institution of Civil Engineers, whilst Evan, the youngest – so named after his grandfather, yet another railway engineer – would turn down the opportunity to become a member of that same institution. But, before we turn once again to railway construction, we look briefly at another of Hopkins' work – the Plymouth, Royal Union Baths.¹⁰

As early as 1824 designs for marine baths in Plymouth were furnished by John Foulston,¹¹ the leading architect in Devon and the Westcountry, but for undisclosed reasons the project failed to materialise and the company raised for that purpose was dissolved. In 1828, however, a charter of incorporation was granted by the king to Edmund Lockyer Esq., for the purpose of erecting such baths.

Roger Hopkins, under the direction of the project committee, prepared the necessary elevation and plans and, on 29 July 1828, the foundation stone was laid by Sir Ryan

Martin, acting as proxy for King George IV.

On 2 January 1830, the *Cambrian*, a Swansea newspaper (with a healthy and local interest in the career of Roger Hopkins) published an extract from the *Devonport Journal* in which the following details are recorded:

'This magnificent establishment is now in a great state of forwardness, and is expected that it will be completed about the latter end of the month. There are nine warm baths and six plunge baths already finished, the two swimming baths merely require to be cleaned out for the use of the bathers. The reservoir being completed, the library, confectionary and lodging rooms &c are proceeding with all possible despatch. The greatest credit is due to Mr Roger Hopkins (formerly from Swansea) for the zeal and assiduity he has displayed in the very arduous discharge of his duty ...'

The opening of the Plymouth Baths on 1 May 1830, drew further comment, this time from the *Woolmers and Plymouth Gazette*, which reported: '... the design and execution of the work reflect the highest credit on the very talented architect of Teignmouth Bridge, R. Hopkins Esq., under whose direction it was raised.'

In less than twenty years, however, the Union Baths were demolished to make way for the Millbay railway development.

In his paper: *Bideford and Okehampton Railway of 1831*, (read at Bideford, July 1902), Sir Robert Lethbridge K.C.I.E. (1940-1919),¹⁶ praises Roger Hopkins as 'a man of great power and ability'. Lethbridge – a relative of the solicitors for the original enterprise – had, in his retirement, gathered together all the relevant documents he could lay his hands on. From these we learn that Hopkins returned to north Devon in 1831 to carry out surveys to make reports on the proposed Bideford and Okehampton Railway, under the direction of Captain John Morth Woolcombe, chairman of the subscribers committee. A general report on the whole line (21 miles) and its prospects was completed and presented to the committee on 11 November that year.

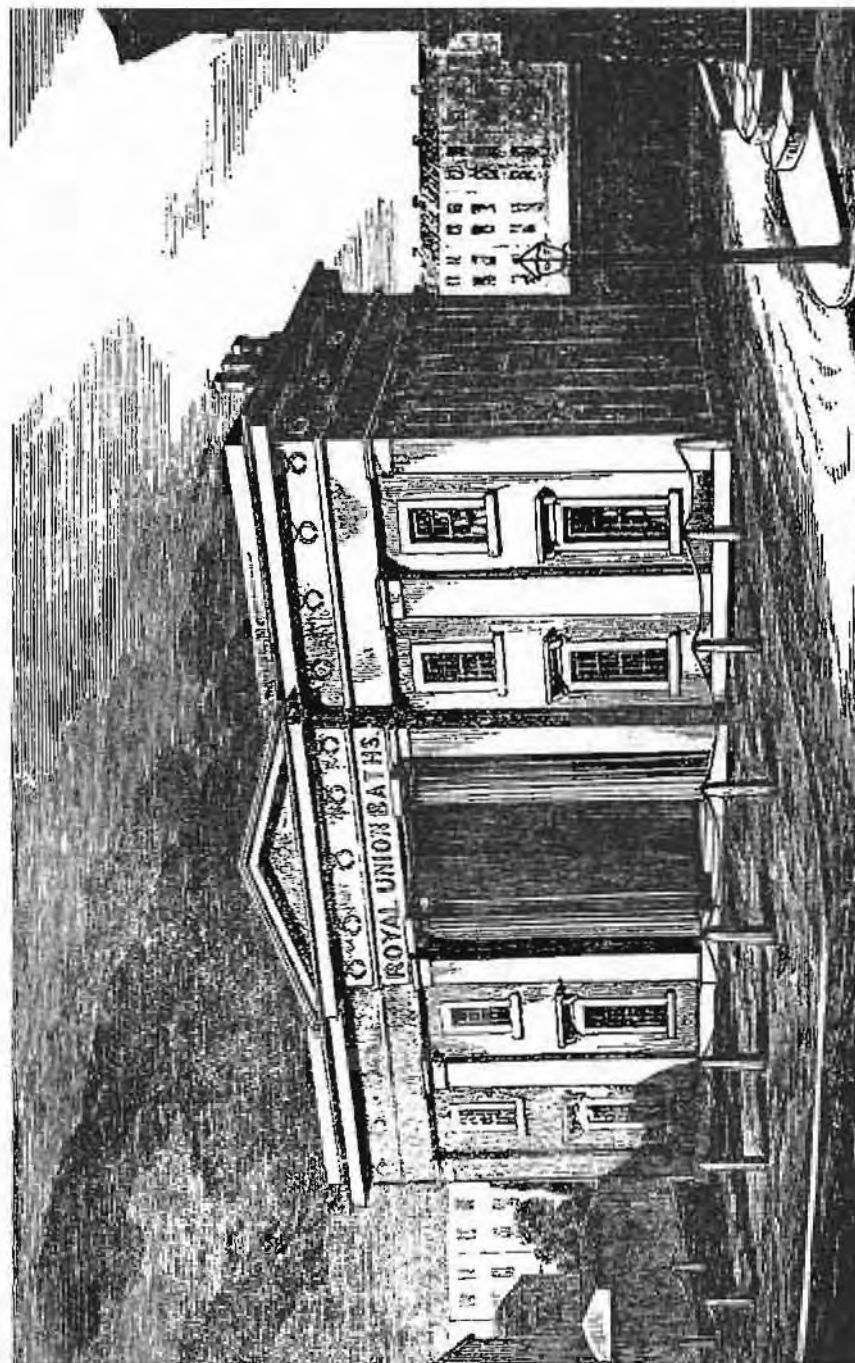
For some unexplained reason (though) all the brilliant prospects set forth in the report of Mr Roger Hopkins, were not sufficient to carry the line through ...'

Even as late as 1834, when he was engaged elsewhere, Hopkins still regarded himself as engineer to the railway for Bideford and Okehampton. In the paper just mentioned, Lethbridge – in referring to the year 1901 – wrote that: 'Somewhat fitful attempts are still being, from time to time, made to carry out Roger Hopkins ideas – to bring the Bristol Channel, the Welsh coalfields, and the trade of Bideford into direct communication with the fertile districts of West Devon and with the centres of population at Plymouth and Devonport'.

One final commitment in the Westcountry for Hopkins, was the Bodmin and Wadebridge Railway in Cornwall.¹⁷

In 1831 landowner Sir William Molesworth of Pencarrow, near Bodmin, employed Roger Hopkins and Sons, 'civil engineers of Plymouth' to carry out surveys and to make reports on the best line for a railroad. Reports, estimates and statements were presented on 25 October to a 'numerous and highly respectable meeting' held at Olivers Hotel, Bodmin. Matters were put in hand, a Bill was raised, and on 23 May 1832 the Royal Assent was obtained. Serious delays followed until May 1833 when work on a little over twelve miles of railway track began and was laid on average of one mile per month.

Hopkins was sent off to Neath Abbey Ironworks in South Wales to discuss plans and specifications for a locomotive steam engine (subsequently named the *Camel*), with Quaker Ironmaster Joseph Tregelles Price. This was to be the first application of loco-



Royal Union Baths, Plymouth

motive steam traction in Cornwall.¹⁵

The railway, raised for the 'transportation of ore and granite for shipment, and to convey inland limestone shelly sea sand as fertiliser for agricultural use,' was officially opened on 30 September 1834. On that first day, passengers – including the engineer Roger Hopkins, his sons, and the band of the Royal Cornwall Militia in full uniform – travelled the new railway at the rate of 6 to 10 miles an hour. Hopkins made the comment, 'This is one of the happiest days of my life.'

The Cornish newspaper, *West Briton*, dated 17 October 1834 reported the proposed extension of the Bodmin and Wadebridge Railway, on by Camelford, then from Launceston to Calstock with plans to connect with Bideford and Okehampton, Exeter and Crediton. 'From the success of the able engineers Messrs Hopkins and Sons, patronized as they are by the Noblemen and Gentlemen, proprietors of the soil over which this line extends, there is no doubt but that in a comparatively short period the whole of these lines and their collateral branches will be perfected.'

The report proved to be over-optimistic. Hopkins, instead, transferred his interests to the iron trade of south Wales and became involved in joint-stock iron company speculation, during that was popularly known at the time as 'railway mania' (see below).

During 1836 Roger Hopkins founded the Monmouthshire Iron and Coal Company in Bath¹⁶ at the time of the railway and ironboom of 1836-1839. In 1837, the Company leased a tract of minerals in the parish of Bedwelty in the county of Monmouth, south Wales, with mines at Bedwelty and Alfercarn, and formed an ill-fated, joint-stock iron company 'into which the whole livings of professional men and private individuals of comfortable means were recklessly cast'. These were, it was said, 'iron-mad speculators, adventurers who were fired with an inducement to the shareholders of a return of 81 per cent per annum.'

Some £200,000 was raised to erect an ironworks. Hopkins and Sons built it and Roger was appointed as managing director. Victoria Ironworks at Ebbw Vale had come into being.¹⁷ But in 1839, this speculative venture – only recently brought into operation for the first time – began to collapse, due to massive over-production throughout the iron trade and a slump in railway construction causing the price of iron to fall. With Victoria's capital exhausted, and for the want of material to supply, 'directors became panic stricken and abandoned the helm, some committing suicide and others seeking an asylum of safety in foreign countries'. By 1840, Victoria had failed and surviving directors were ordered to hand over the whole of the works to the Monmouthshire and Glamorganshire Banking Company in repayment of a debt of £12,500. With deepening depression in the iron trade (1839-1844), most joint-stock iron companies suffered the same fate.¹⁸

By late 1842 Hopkins had turned his back on south Wales and settled in France at Boulogne.¹⁹ By 1845, his sons, Rice and Thomas had returned to Devon to survey and engineer various railway projects at Bideford and Tavistock²⁰ whilst the youngest son Evan became engaged in committee management work with the Plymouth and Dartmoor Railway Company.²¹ Roger Hopkins, however, was planning to raise a new company under his own name to erect furnaces, not only at Boulogne, but all over France.²² The outcome of these plans, seems not to have been recorded. Two years later Roger Hopkins, now in his seventy-second year, was dead.

★ ★ ★

Roger Hopkins M.I.C.E. civil engineer, mineral surveyor, architect, and *ironmaster*

N^o 155
Folio of Minutes Book 412
Admitted, 6.1.1827

Institution of Civil Engineers.

Buckingham Street, Adelphi.

Roger Hopkins of Plymouth
Civil Engineer

being desirous of admission into the Institution of Civil Engineers, we the undersigned, from our personal knowledge, propose and recommend him as a proper person to become Corresponding Member thereof.

Witness our hands this 13th day of February 1827

Feb^y 20 1827
Approved
Robt. Lubbock
Chairman

Wm. Gifford
Robt. F.oley
H. Curtis

Printed by Richard Taylor,
New-Lane, London.

Roger Hopkins became corresponding Member of the Institution of Civil Engineers – 1827

Permission: Architect – Institution of Civil Engineers

(his own description), died at 109 Upper Stamford Street, Lambeth on 27 July 1847, the London home of his eldest son Rice.

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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.)

Buller: A Scapegoat? A Life of General Sir Redvers Buller 1839-1908 by Geoffrey Powell. Leo Cooper, 1994, 245pp, 19 plates and 6 maps. £21. ISBN 0 85052 279 X

When I entered Exeter School in September 1940 I was allocated to Buller House. (The others were Raleigh and Drake, while the boarders constituted School House.) Apart from knowing of the Buller statue near what was then Hele's School, and that General Buller had been involved in the Boer War, I knew little about this local hero.

But gradually one picked up the odd snippet. While it seemed that Buller was highly regarded in Devon, and my father-in-law was christened Redvers (rather like a present-day parent would celebrate a footballer or pop star), he appeared to have been discredited as a military leader.

And so I lived with my ignorance until I read Thomas Pakenham's doorstep of a book *The Boer War* (Weidenfeld & Nicholson 1979, Futura paperback 1982) in which the cobwebs were blown away. On the first page of his Introduction Pakenham writes how he '... stumbled on the lost archives of Sir Redvers Buller, the British Commander-in-Chief in 1899 – battle letters of Buller's which had remained under the billiard table at Downes, his house in Devon ...'

Pakenham also found other records, diaries and papers never previously taken into account in a rounded judgement of the Boer War, and it was his researches which stimulated the author of this book, Geoffrey Powell, a military historian, to write the first biography of Buller since the 1920s.

Powell has trawled back the archives, as well as 100 books listed in the bibliography, and produced a fine book which, while not a whitewash, puts Buller's mistakes in context, and illuminates his considerable achievements in putting the British Army's supply and transport services on a sound footing. He also

'... evolved the tactics needed to overcome Boer defences based upon fortified entrenchments and the recently introduced quick-firing weapons using smokeless missiles'

The author recounts with great panache, and with considerable support from numbered references, an almost year-by-year summary of Buller's military career up to the time of the Boer War, something that few people will be aware of, and which at times reads like a *Boy's Own Paper* serial.

Buller was born at Downes near Crediton in 1839, educated at a prep school, Harrow, Eton and a Tunbridge Wells crammer. This was meant to prepare him for the Sandhurst entrance examination. In the end, however, his parents purchased him a commission for £400, and he became an ensign with the 60th Rifles at Winchester.

He enjoyed a happy home life as a child at Downes, though almost lost a limb in an accident in the woods. Indeed the doctor wanted to amputate the leg as the boy's life was at risk, but Buller objected violently, and it was saved.

His first overseas tour of duty was in India, where he arrived at the tail end of the Indian Mutiny. He stayed a year – his only time there – before being sent to Hong Kong

to participate in one of the last engagements in the inglorious so-called Opium Wars.

From China, Buller was sent to Canada where he honed the backwoods skills he first learned at Downes. He returned to England, but was soon sent back to Canada and found himself involved in the Red River expedition, which was despatched across country to put down a rebellion by the *metis*, people of mixed French and Indian blood. The task needed firm leadership and Buller provided it.

The senior staff officer in Canada was the then Colonel Garnet Wolseley, much later to become Field-Marshal Viscount Wolseley (and the original of W.S. Gilbert's 'modern major-general'), and he wrote afterwards:

'All the officers with the expeditionary force soon became expert in making portages and in mending their boats, no one more so than my very able friend and comrade Redvers Buller. It was here I first made his acquaintance, and I am proud to feel that we have been firm friends ever since. He was a first-rate axeman, and I think he was the only man with us of any rank who could carry a 100lb barrel of pork over a portage on his back. He could mend a boat and have her back in the water with her crew and all her stores on board whilst many, under similar circumstances would have been still making up their minds what to do. Full of resource, and personally absolutely fearless, those serving under him always trusted him fully.

Buller did a third tour of duty in Canada, but returned in 1872 as he had gained a place at the Staff College at Camberley. However, he did not complete the course as he went to war in the Ashanti campaign. This was inland from the modern Ghana, and here he once again distinguished himself with his hands-on leadership. But the climate nearly did for him, and he spent much of the summer of 1874 convalescing at Downes, though he was no doubt fortunate to have survived the 'white man's grave' at all. Now, with time, he began to read voraciously. This year his older brother died, so he became squire of the Buller estates which extended to 5,000 acres in Devon and Cornwall. He was tempted to retire, but instead did a stint at the War Office.

By 1878 he was eager for field duties once more, and set off for South Africa to take part in what became known as the Ninth Kaffir War. Here he was in charge of the 250-strong Frontier Light Horse, his first independent command, and shared the hardships of his unit. It was during the battle of Hlobane that Buller and four of his troop won VCs for conspicuous bravery. Powell writes that: 'It was said of him that he earned the coveted decoration twenty times during the war.' Eventually his health broke down once more. Veldt sores crippled his hands, and permanently affected his writing.

When he arrived back in England he found himself promoted to colonel, appointed an ADC to the Queen, and faced a welcome at Crediton station of the sort now only accorded to teams which have won the FA Cup. A month later he had to speak at an Exeter celebration banquet, something he hated. But the visit to the Queen at Balmoral was more enjoyable, and each took to the other.

In 1881 he was back in South Africa, though too late to take part in the latest hostilities, so he kicked his heels as an administrator until he was posted home. Now forty-two, he got married to the thirty-seven year-old widow of a cousin, who had two sons and two daughters already, and had another daughter, Audrey Charlotte Georgiana, by her second husband.

Their honeymoon in the Low Countries was interrupted by Wolseley suggesting he join a British expeditionary force being got together to protect the Empire's interests then focussed on the Suez Canal which had opened thirteen years before. Thus it was

that Buller played a prominent part in the battle of Tel el Kebir. The intelligence he gathered beforehand, and the briefing and marshalling of the columns, made for a successful outcome. Powell completes his account of this episode with a racy description of its aftermath:

'There had been no rest for Buller after Tel el Kebir. First he was busy arranging the collection and examination of the hordes of prisoners in the immediate aftermath of the battle. Then, the morning after the cavalry occupied Cairo, he reached the city himself, accompanying Wolseley in a captured train and travelling on the footplate with a sapper so as to keep an eye on its Egyptian driver. Once there, he and [General] Butler, both starving, took a cab to find a restaurant.'

Buller now found himself Assistant Adjutant General at the War Office, but it was not long before the Sudan became the next campaign to engage the British forces, and Major-General Charles Gordon was sent to Khartoum. Buller was sent later, and once again proved himself in a battle near the Red Sea where his brigade was attacked on all sides by massed dervishes. He was now promoted to Major-General, and he was still only forty-four. He went home briefly to England, but with Gordon besieged a force of which Buller was a part was sent up the Nile, but was too far north to save him, though there were other engagements before he returned to England for yet another stint at the War Office.

His next appointment, in 1886, was as much political and social as military. He went to south-west Ireland as a Special Commissioner, with uniformed troops at his disposal to keep the peace, and he established his headquarters in the Railway Hotel at Killarney and later moved to Dublin. He didn't stay in Ireland long as he was thought to be too sympathetic towards the Irish peasants, but came back to the War Office once more.

This time his seniority enabled him to create the Army Service Corps (the 'Royal' was added in 1918). While here he is said to have turned the Prince of Wales out of his office over a matter concerned with the Tranby Croft affair. While the Queen lived this did little harm, but after her death in 1901 it came to matter that the Court and Society were hostile to him.

When this period at the War Office ended he semi-retired to Downes for twelve months, and in 1898, a full general, went to Aldershot as head of training. In 1899 a full-scale war broke out with the Boers, and Buller went to South Africa as Commander-in-Chief with a force of 50,000 men. After weeks spent in organisation at Cape Town, he felt it necessary to be nearer the action, most of which was 1,000 miles to the north-east, but the silence of his departure annoyed those he didn't inform, among them Leo Amery, *The Times* correspondent – who was to become his bitterest critic. Buller knew that Cape Town was full of spies, and there were advantages in keeping the enemy guessing. His first intention and necessity was to relieve the town of Ladysmith which had been invested by the Boers, and where 14,000 British soldiers had got themselves pinned down with their commander, General Sir George White. The place was indefensible, hemmed in by ridges and hills, and with a bad health record.

Between Ladysmith and the veldt, the characteristic plains of South Africa, was a maze of hills (kopjes) and gorges through which any relieving force would have to fight its way, and on the edge of the veldt, on the south bank of the Tugela river, was the settlement of Colenso, the key to Ladysmith as it had a bridge.

Powell discussed Buller's attempts to reach Ladysmith in considerable detail, and

the first push met with disaster. Major-General Hart's four battalions were cut to pieces in a re-entrant made by a loop of the river. Buller, in person, organised and took part in a party of volunteers to recover some abandoned guns, and in this episode seven VCs were won. One criticism levelled at Buller was that the recovery should have been effected after dark.

At the end of the battle, worn out, thirsty in the extreme heat, he sent a signal to London which included the phrase 'My view is that I ought to let Ladysmith go ...' These words shocked the War Office, and the wheels started to turn which sent General Sir Frederick Roberts to Africa as C. in C., and the forty-nine year-old Lord Kitchener, ennobled after Omdurman. Buller remained in charge in the Natal area.

It was later revealed when the Royal Commission met that the words 'let Ladysmith go' was the current military terminology for the suspension of operations; the Army equivalent of the Navy's 'part company with'. But by this time the damage had been done, and faith in Buller was undermined. Also there were the two 'rings' – the Wolseley 'African' ring which included Buller, and the Roberts 'Indian' ring, and Lord Lansdowne (Secretary for War) supported the Indians. (Pakenham remarks in *The Boer War*, 'What victories they would have won, Lansdowne's generals, if they could have fought an enemy with the vigour they showed in fighting each other!') But with Wolseley now elderly the initiative had moved to the Indians.

Buller's telegram to the War Office was followed by a heliograph message to White, locked up in Ladysmith, in which he said, *inter alia*, that White should make '... the best terms you can ...'. Nevertheless he began preparations to relieve Ladysmith. During the push the young Winston Churchill was present and Powell quotes his observation culled from Churchill's *Ladysmith*.

'Buller took personal command. He arrived on the field cheerful, inscrutable as ever, rode hither and thither with a weary staff and a huge notebook, gripped the whole business in his strong hands, and so took it into shape that we crossed the river in safety, comfort and good order, with a most remarkable mechanical precision, and without the loss of a single man or a pound of stores.

Churchill hints at Buller's efficiency, and he had a reputation for hating loss of life, which his men loved him for. Also, he would share their discomforts.

Buller's tactics with big gun superiority and manpower was a step-by-step operation of artillery barrages supported by attacking infantry, and one by one the Boer positions were wiped out, and Ladysmith was free.

Further successes followed, and the campaign became a guerilla war which did not demand his presence, so in October 1900 he sailed for England. His welcome was enthusiastic, and he had an audience with the very elderly Queen to whom he had written during the war. Songs were written about him. Testimonials on vellum were produced and plates made in the Potteries. Postcards bearing his likeness were even on sale in Paris.

All his life Buller had detested reporters and war correspondents, and Leo Amery was his *bête noire*. A story went the rounds while Buller was in South Africa that when asked by Amery the best place to view the forthcoming battle in safety, the general replied contemptuously 'Go anywhere, to New Zealand, if you like!' This was the same Leo Amery who forty years later as a Member of Parliament expedited Chamberlain's departure as Prime Minister when he quoted Cromwell's words: 'You have sat too long here for any good you have been doing. Depart, I say, and let us have done with you. In the name of God, go.'

On 28 September 1901 Amery had a letter published in *The Times* over a pseudonym 'Reformer' which reproached Buller for a string of mistakes in South Africa using phrases like 'utter fatuity', half-hearted attempts', and 'inexcusable failure'. A couple of weeks later Buller was speaking and launched into an ill-advised, intemperate and impromptu defence of his actions. This gave Amery the chance to reply.

Events now followed quickly, all carefully detailed by Powell, and Buller was dismissed from his position at Aldershot and relegated to half-pay. He asked for a court-martial to clear his name but was refused, though he put his case to the Royal Commission on the South Africa War, also known as the Elgin Commission. A fellow Devonian, the Hon John Fortescue, author of the eleven volume *History of the British Army* helped him prepare his 80,000 word submission.

Amery continued to rubbish Buller, and with the publication of *The Times History of the War in South Africa* (six volumes 1902-1906) which he edited and largely wrote, his condemnation as scapegoat was assured.

Buller had in the meantime returned to manage his West Country estate, and lived the life of a respected and much loved squire at Downes, where he entered into the public life of the area. Not many famous men see their likeness raised in their lifetime, but Buller was present to see his Exeter statue (sculpted by Adrian Jones) unveiled by Lord Ebrington. Wolseley had promised to perform the honour, but ill health prevented his attendance.

Buller's daughter, who became Dame Georgiana Buller, and who lived where Devon County Hall now stands, founded St Loyes College for the Training and Rehabilitation of the Disabled in 1937.

One is left wondering at the end of this book why the author added a question mark to the title. He has made out a good case for Buller being nominated as culpable for the shortcomings of the British Army, so why weaken his case by implying doubt?

Buller's popularity with the locals is demonstrated by the timely anecdote recounted by Adrian Reed in *The Devon Historian* no 48, page 20 under the appropriate title 'A Lasting Reputation'. Powell's words sum up how best he was seen nationally:

'Buller became the bogeyman of the Boer War, the epitome of all that was wrong with British generalship. The name 'Buller' helped, as did his appearance, his visage jowled and heavy in repose.'

Buller died in June 1908 having only been ill for the last six months of his life. His wife received a flood of letters of condolence, including one from his old Boer antagonist, Louis Botha. He is buried at Crediton, where the funeral was worthy of the man.

Brian Le Messurier

Early Charters of the Redvers Family and the Earldom of Devon 1090-1217 ed. Robert Bearman: xvi + 227 pp: 1 plate (Devon and Cornwall Record Society, New Ser. 37, 1994).

This volume, based on work submitted for a London doctorate completed under the supervision of Allen Brown some thirteen years ago, is much to be welcomed. The quantity of early charters already in print for the West Country is not large, and so the complete texts of some 127 charters dating before 1217 make a very significant contribution to knowledge. According to my calculation almost half of the charters in the

body of the book have not been printed in full before. Dr Bearman also provides material about a further thirty-nine texts now lost, and forty other charters which refer to member of the family. This is not, alas, in comparison with the riches available for, say, Yorkshire, a very large haul, and it has to be admitted that most of the material here concerns the estates of the Redvers family in the Isle of Wight, the centre of their lordship, and the honour of Christchurch, mostly in Dorset and Hampshire. But over thirty charters deal with the lands in Devon which became known as the Honour of Plympton.

Dr Bearman has had to trawl very widely in the archives, since the Redvers family left behind no cartulary of their own. Instead recourse has been made mainly to surviving materials relating to almost twenty religious houses or greater churches which the family patronised on both sides of the Channel. This is not, however, the story of a great trans-channel lordship, since Richard de Redvers' estates were split between two sons on his death, and never reunited. It is, however, interesting to find that earl Richard II decided to be buried at Montebourg in 1188/89 (no. 85), although two of his family planned to be buried at Christchurch not very much earlier (nos 53, 56): probably attendance on King Richard in Normandy is the explanation. I wish that space could have been found for discussing the family's religious interests since they span the spectrum of old and new orders. Twice, at least one senses a hint of humour in this area. Earl Richard I added to the gifts his father had made to Christchurch a salmon on the anniversary of his father's death, and another to follow when he himself died, so that the canons having feasted would be able to celebrate the divine offices more devoutly and joyfully for them both, *ut in anniversariis nostris inde recreati devotius et festivus* [which I think is more likely than *festivus*, quickly] *divina pro nobis celebrent obsequia* (no 49). Later, earl William, his brother, made another gift so that Christchurch should have enough beer in the hope that prayer might be more whole-hearted, *affectuosus* (no 106).

The introduction presents the story of the family clearly, and has particularly interesting discussions of income, to which seven boroughs made very significant contributions. The size of the estate is reflected in the fact that in the early 1150s the burgesses of Christchurch thought it worth while to get the earl to free them from the duty of carrying writs, *portatione brevium* (no 31). On the whole, although the wealth which Henry I granted to the first Richard catapulted him amongst the greatest barons, neither he, nor his successors, played a great part in national affairs, apart from his son earl Baldwin, a firm supporter of Matilda. At that time one would have thought that relationships with his mother's family, the Peverels of Nottingham, must have been strained, since they stood by Stephen, something which contributed to the forfeiture of most of their lands early in the reign of Henry II. Nonetheless, charters here show Peverels holding in Devon and witnessing Redvers deeds right through this period. There is probably more to be teased out about this relationship and that with the Paynells, another family which supported Matilda, and held lands both in the Midlands and Devon.

The transcription of texts has been carried through clearly and carefully, though sometimes the notes could have been more helpful. A glossary of thirty-nine technical terms does not contain *tenseria* (p80), nor help with the fascinating charter of 1155 x 1162 allowing a market in Plympton *in domibus suis et terris ecclesie, sive in bracinis sive in taneris sive in bulcigeris* ... (p92 and 123). I suspect, having consulted the *Medieval Latin Word-List*, that brewhouses, tanneries and bakeries are meant, but I

am sure Dr Boreman should have told us what he thinks. A number of other unfamiliar terms occur without comment: *chervesez* (nos 15, 34, 49, 92), which I take to be the equivalent of *chirchsettas* (no 13): i.e. church scot, which is in the glossary and indexed, but the four entries mentioned are not there; *vislanagiis* (no 72), and *vilanagio* (no 78) are not picked up under villeins. What, I wonder also, is the whole chapelry of Bere, *coram tot capello de Bere*, before which a gift was confirmed c.1175 x 1184 (no 67), and what position in the second Hawise de Redvers household was filled by *angero ... meo* (no 119)? I searched the *Word-List* in vain, and when I turned to Lewis and Short found soothsayer, which scarcely seems likely.

This is an interesting and important collection, which will be much used by all interested in the twelfth century. Dr Bearman and the Society are to be congratulated upon it. Printing and design are excellent, and the whole enclosed in a very lovely cover, created around a panel of David and Goliath taken from a thirteenth-century psalter in Exeter Cathedral Library.

Christopher Holdsworth

An Illustrated History of Lynton and Lynmouth 1770-1914, by John Travis, Breedon Books, 1995, 190pp, illustrated, £9.99. ISBN 1 85983 023 4

The farmers of Lynton raised sheep, the fishermen of Lynmouth caught herrings but by the end of the eighteenth century the woollen industry was in wartime recession and the fish had gone away. Opportunely, the cult of the Picturesque brought a new livelihood to both communities. The scenery was there; steep cliffs, romantic crags, mountain torrents and the Valley of Rocks with its druidical possibilities. So comfortable hotels and lodgings were provided for the discerning tourist whose other interests were limited to sketching; collecting ferns and a little sea bathing. Soon wealthy families built large houses for summer occupation, some in fact staying the whole year round. It was these people who, with one or two successful local entrepreneurs, decided the future of the two communities. They were determined to keep out the 'trippers' who the innkeepers and small tradesmen wanted in. Hence the prolonged and successful opposition to a pier, at which the pleasure steamers from Bristol and Cardiff could berth, and the effective resistance to a railway. When the latter came in 1898 it was an inconvenient narrow gauge line not suited for mass incursions. Inaccessibility was a low price for exclusiveness, nor would there have been much to please the undesired visitors when they got there. It was a resort organised to satisfy the well to do.

The most important and beneficent influence on the development of the area was that of George Newnes, the publisher. To him was due the cliff railway connecting the two villages, much of the capital for the narrow gauge line, the Congregational Church and a town hall costing £20,000 on top of many lesser gifts. Other settlers were also generous in their support. Not surprisingly, many of the personalities involved were abrasive in their dealings with each other. The disputes over the harbour between one lord of the manor, Roe, and his neighbouring lord, a clergyman, is a typical example. Even more divisive were the squabbles occasioned by the Rev. Lawson in his twenty year incumbency from 1866. His high Anglicanism led to the establishment of a 'free' church while his school policies produced opposition establishments of many denominations. After he had gone all these matters resolved themselves.

The author has also considered other aspects of the past of the two villages from

smuggling and lifeboats to the coming of the motor car. As an illustrated history it is well done with comprehensive coverage both of people and buildings. The photograph of an early motor car being taken up the cliff railway is a reminder both that it was used to transport goods as well as people and that it would be some time before the cautious motorist would risk the hill between the two villages. The story closes in 1914 because after the war the rich did not return and their houses became private hotels and boarding houses. Possibly because of its isolation there does not seem to have been much retirement settlement by the moderately wealthy, as for example, at Exmouth but, as the author observes, the legacy of the wealthy has been the preservation of the resort and its scenery unmarred.

The book is attractively produced in hard back, low priced and the illustrations are very clearly printed. The author has had a good story to tell and has told it well. My only disappointment is that there are no plans of the villages which would have helped the reader to follow the course of development and to identify the present day sites of the buildings mentioned in the text.

Adrian Reed

An Old Radical and His Brood. A portrait of Sir John Bowring and his family based mainly on the correspondence of Bowring and his son, Frederick Bowering. By G.F. Bartle. Janus Publishing Company, 1994, 140 pp, £9.95. ISBN 1 85756 132 5.

In spite of the author's disclaimer this book is a good short biography of Sir John Bowring and as such is more than a background against which to set his relations with his family. It is a fair assessment of a man whose character and actions display so many contradictions that it is often difficult to determine whether or not a particular course is followed from principle or from expediency. His dedication to his family at least is never in doubt.

When he was twenty-four Bowring married Maria Lewin, the daughter of a Unitarian corn merchant. She was a resourceful woman of strong character, devoted to her husband, and a good mother to their children. Her life cannot have been easy with the Bowring fortunes several times switching abruptly from easy affluence to near penury and back again. Her children seem to have been brought up partly with her and partly with their grandfather and aunts at Larkbear in Exeter. Although she did sometimes accompany her husband on his shorter trips abroad she was left at home when he set out on his longer commercial expeditions. After he went to Canton as Consul in 1849 she was not to see him again for four and a half years. It is not surprising that she insisted on returning with him to China with two of their daughters after his leave in 1854. It was not a happy decision. Weakened by the climate she came home to die in 1858.

Bowring devoted considerable effort to securing positions for his sons. He gave his daughters a suitable education but there is no suggestion that he was concerned to find them husbands. He and they might have been happier if he had. Like his two 'eccentric' sisters at Larkbear none of the three was to marry. Religion and good works were to prove not altogether satisfactory substitutes. With his sons he was more successful. He got the eldest, John, into Jardine Matheson, a firm heavily engaged in opium selling, a trade which he had publicly denounced. Later, when John had become a partner in the company Bowring negotiated a treaty with Siam which included provision for

the free import of opium. Not surprisingly this provoked strong criticism, not least from his former Radical friends. His third son, Lewin, was given an Indian writership by Hobhouse, then President of the Board of Control. The following year Bowring chose to attack the East India Company in the Commons to the fury of Hobhouse who felt that such 'preposterous conduct' could only be explained by a cash inducement. Lewin went on to a distinguished career in the ICS. Frederick, the second son, became a barrister and, resident in England, seems to have been his father's adviser on family matters. Edgar was found a place at the Board of Trade and latterly was used by his absent father as his private link with the administration. After his retirement, standing as a Liberal, he won one of the Exeter seats in the 1868 General Election, but lost it in 1874.

Charles, the youngest son, caused a family crisis by becoming a Roman Catholic. He left Cambridge to study for the priesthood and died in Rome shortly after ordination. Lewin also became a Roman Catholic while Emily insisted on remaining in Hong Kong as member of a Catholic order when her father retired to England. Maria and her other brothers became Anglicans and it is possible that only Edith remained a Unitarian. Bowring himself married secondly a Unitarian lady of the age of his own children, to their surprised annoyance, and thereafter resumed his interest in Unitarianism. She proved a good wife to him in his active Exeter retirement. Although divided confessionally the children were united in the defence of their father when his Chinese actions were criticised but, privately, only Edgar thought that he had acted correctly.

The papers given at the Bowring Bicentary Conference at Exeter in 1992 and published the following year (reviewed in *The Devon Historian* No. 47 pp28-30) examined in some detail certain aspects of Bowring's career. Mr Bartle's much wider survey, although in parts where the family was not concerned necessarily compressed, is an admirable pendant to the earlier publication. He has drawn directly on the Bowring correspondence in the John Rylands Library as well as other official and non-official sources. The result is the portrait of a family in which the children, however strangely they may sometimes act, seem uncomplicated in their attitudes to life in contrast to the involved and elusive character of their father. Mr Bartle has given us the material: it is for each reader to try to judge for himself what was the real Sir John Bowring.

Adrian Reed.

Loyalty and locality: popular allegiance in Devon during the English Civil War, by Mark Stoye, University of Exeter Press, 1994, £25, 330 pp, ISBN 0859894282

It is now three years since the start of the commemorative events marking the onset of the Civil War. Perhaps it is not surprising that unlike the response in 1988 to note the Armada, there has been such a poor showing of research examining Devon's history in the 1640s. The publication of Dr Stoye's book will by itself greatly fill that vacuum. The immediate impression of this book, with its appealing cover, is of the high standard of presentation with which the University of Exeter Press is becoming identified. Many readers will already be drawn to the book because of its title, with the hope of finally understanding a period of Devon's history which is particularly interesting but problematic. Some readers may thus be initially dismayed by the brevity of the chronology which is provided. But in many ways this is at the crux of the subject matter and this

book: it is not enough merely to try to follow the course of events and those individuals involved. Few historians will have a clear understanding of what happened locally in the 1640s. This is only to be expected since even fewer will have firm opinions on the causes of local behaviour, given the length of time in which there was political uncertainty as well as the problematic nature of Devon with its geographical size and mini-regions. Thus it is not Dr Stoye's aim merely to chronicle events in Devon in the 1640s, or indeed to explain why they happened, but to examine how they affected the general population, with the intention of seeing what help this is when looking at the national picture. Dr Stoye attempts this by testing Professor David Underdown's thesis based on his work on three other western counties. Dr Stoye examines the character of local allegiance in Devon – if there were clearly defined areas of loyalty, why there were divisions – and he examines this against a national pattern. He concludes that all but mid-Devon was for Parliament, with the city of Exeter sharply split by parish. To what extent he has succeeded may well be decided by historians of Devon's mini-regions who may be the best judges. Given that we have another four years before the events commemorating the Civil War end (and those marking the Commonwealth begin), we can begin to understand how such a long period, with dramatic changes in political fortunes, influenced the behaviour and loyalties of those involved. *Loyalty and locality* may remain topical for another four years, but for those interested in the study of seventeenth-century Devon it will prove to be an indispensable work for many more years to come.

Todd Gray

About Tavistock: an historical introduction and six town walks. The Tavistock & District Local History Society. 1995. £3.50.

Having made two visits to Tavistock recently, for me this new account by a group of people living there was both an opportunity to recall memories of earlier visits and to be reminded that the town has had a long and important history since the Benedictines arrived there a thousand years ago. It was, therefore, a little surprising that the member of staff at the hotel bearing its name to whom I spoke was not too sure of Ordulph's importance to Tavistock. There is a schematic plan printed on the centre pages. There are sixty-six places noted on the list there (from 'Stone posts' to the 'Old toll house' with 'Abbey cloister remains' and 'The Grammar School of 1836' among many others); this gives a good indication of the wide range of places to see and, perhaps in some cases, search for. The book is illustrated with old prints and photographs. For a railway enthusiast, one showing the 'GWR line and Tavy foundry' is a sad reminder of the great days when the town was served, not only by the GWR but also by the LSWR (later the SR) and was the main line of the latter between Exeter and Plymouth. No individual is named as 'author' but whoever was responsible for the finished text should be congratulated, it is a model of straightforward and factual writing.

There is one omission. As the last page is completely blank, the opportunity could have been taken to have included a bibliography list which would have helped readers who would wish to read more about this fascinating old town. I was also a little surprised to find that this excellent little book has no ISBN. In these days of computerised book-ordering, it is essential to have one; this may limit its sales outside Tavistock; however, it is on sale in local shops and information centres on Dartmoor.

John Pike

The Secret of the Babbacombe Murder, by Mike Holgate, Peninsula Press. £6.95. ISBN 1 872640 34 6

For some years Mike Holgate has been fascinated by the John 'the man they could not hang' Lee story and has spent much time and effort looking for the ultimate answer, the person who committed the murder. Colleagues and friends, including this reviewer, suggested that he presented his researches in book-form: this he has now done in conjunction with work he has been doing for a national television company. Most of the story is well-known; indeed it has been the subject of books and television programmes over the years. Mike Holgate has, however, for the first time provided a credible answer as to 'who did it'. It is a modest publication, only a little over 60 pages in length and is not fully indicative of the time and effort he has spent on the task. However, at the foot of the last page lie the clues which have led him to reaching the conclusion he does. He has searched sources worldwide, including Australia (where a short silent film was made) and the United States (where Lee is said to have died after emigrating) as well as libraries and record offices in the United Kingdom. The verdict as to whether he has correctly identified the guilty party must be left to the reader.

John Pike

The story of St Luke's Church, Buckfastleigh, by Helen Harris. 1994. 16pp illus. Price £1 at the church, or £1.25 by post from the Vicar, The Vicarage, Buckfastleigh.

Towards the end of last century, pressing need for a new church in the town of Buckfastleigh, more accessible than the parish church high on a hill, resulted, after an unsuccessful attempt at fund-raising thirty-six years earlier, in the building of St Luke's. Written to commemorate the church's centenary in 1994, Helen Harris's well-documented and illustrated booklet reflects the warmth of her family involvement with St Luke's over three generations. Using a variety of resources: newspaper cuttings, parish magazines, personal reminiscences (including a memorable description of a parish tea), family diaries, church council minutes, local directories. Mrs Harris sets the story of St Luke's firmly in the social and historical context of nineteenth and twentieth century Buckfastleigh. It is made clear from her account that St Luke's continues to respond to the needs of the community she describes to well.

Sheila Stirling

OTHER PUBLICATIONS RECEIVED

Dartmouth History Research Group Papers 14 and 15. Two further papers come from the DHRG in conjunction with Dartmouth Museum, to add to the commendable list previously published. Both are well produced 32-page A5 booklets, containing numerous old pictures, and maps. (Prices not given). Number 14. *The Castle Hotel, Dartmouth*, by Ray Freeman, ISBN 1 899011 04 8 gives an interesting account of the hotel's establishment from the time when it was built in 1639 as the house of a merchant prosperous from the Newfoundland cod trade. In fact the paper also covers more about Dartmouth's history, drawn from the author's wide knowledge of the subject. Number 15: *The Newcomen Road* by Ivor H. Smart, ISBN 1 899011 05 6, gives a detailed account of the making of this road during the 1860s as part of a scheme for improving the town and its services, and the necessary acquisition and demolition of properties to make way for the construction. In the end, however, the road was only partially completed.

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