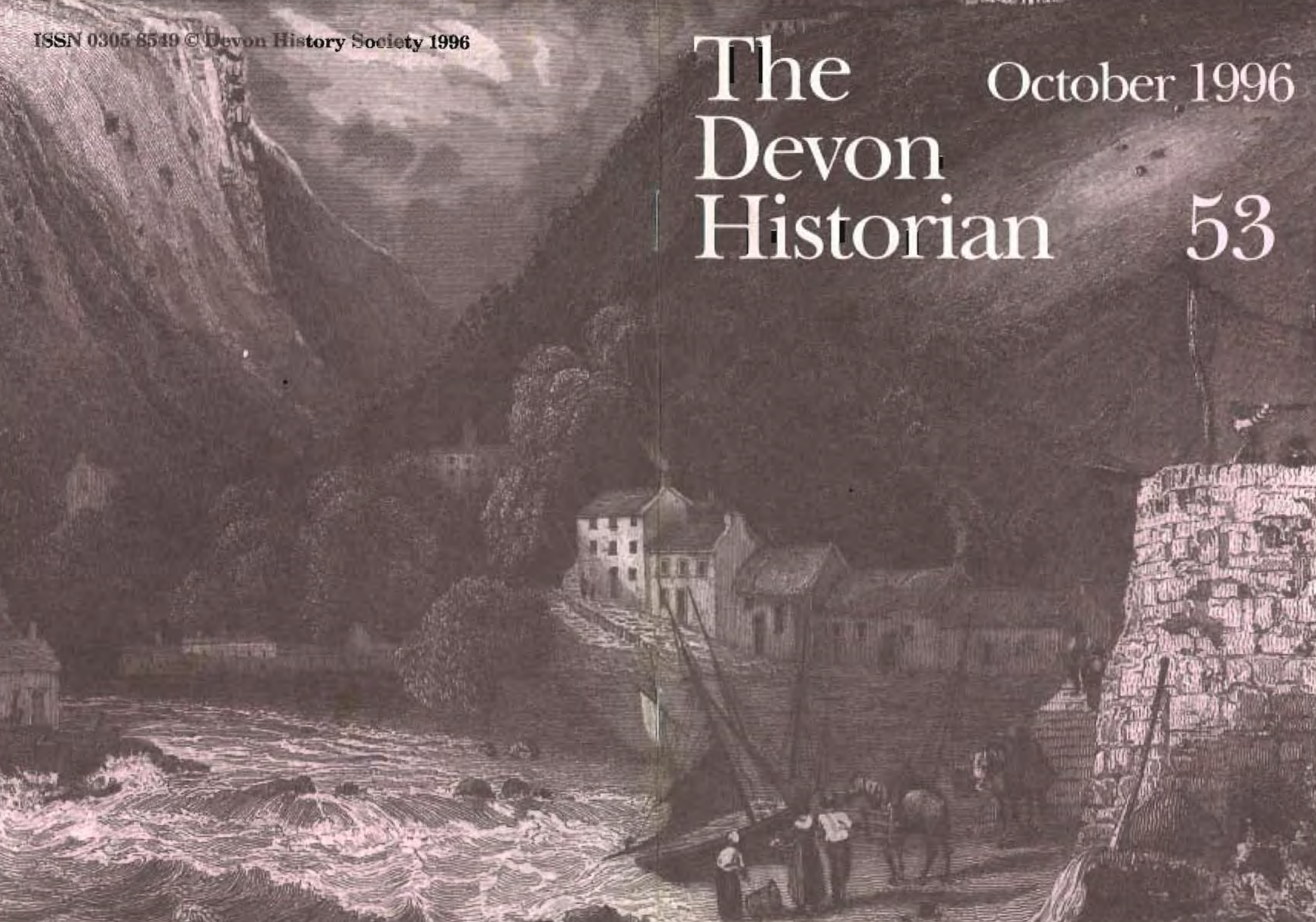


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The Devon Historian is available free to all members of The Devon History Society. Membership subscriptions run annually from 1 May to 30 April and for the coming year will be as follows: Individual: £10.00; Family (that is two or more individuals 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, Whitchurch, Tavistock PL19 9BU. The deadline for the next issue is 30 November 1996. Books for review should be sent to Mrs S. Stirling, c/o Devon & Exeter Institution, 7 The Close, Exeter. EX1 1EZ, who will invite the services of a reviewer. It is not the policy of the Society to receive unsolicited reviews.

DEVON HISTORY SOCIETY AGM AND CONFERENCE

The AGM of the Society will take place at St Luke's College, Exeter, on Saturday 19 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 1996, etc.

EDITORIAL

Occasionally during meetings of the council of The Devon History Society, as well as in the committees of local history groups, opinions are voiced about the importance of recording aspects of our modern age which have now passed into the realms of history. Views are particularly expressed concerning matters relating to the two World Wars, and their effects in Devon.

In just over three years' time we shall reach the millennium. For today's writers the term 'the last century' (used frequently by many of us as an alternative to 'the nineteenth century' or 'the 1800s' - but now more warily if we hope that our publications will survive beyond the year 2000) suggests in the mind a time of somewhat hazy past. Very soon, however, when we say 'the last century' we shall be referring to the twentieth century, the 1900s, the century in which we now live. And, perhaps more staggering to contemplate, both World Wars took place in the century's 'first half'.

Already *The Devon Historian* has published some valuable studies of life and events in the earlier years of what is still 'the present century'. Issue 52, for example, included a focus on New Zealanders in south Devon in World War I, and another on the former pursuit of game in a group of parishes - covering a part of country life which at one time most people knew about but which is increasingly a dead subject. In this latest edition aspects of village life in another part of the county are brought into view by A.J.H. Jackson, using writings of the late Henry Williamson, while Dr Neville Oswald has provided the latest of his contributions, this time a collection of material on the men of his parish - Thurlestone - who died in World War II.

Of course, it is acknowledged that only a proportion of the historical matters featured in this journal could justifiably be devoted to such recent times. The range of subjects pertaining to the county's earlier centuries of history is boundless and must have prominence. But, surely, we should recognise the advantages that still exist for first-hand information to be gathered and recorded while still available. The changes during the 1900s have been so unprecedented and phenomenal that many of today's responsible and learned adults in their twenties and thirties have no idea of, or cannot credit, many of the things that happened in their elders' younger days.

The way in which Neville Oswald has collected and presented his recent Thurlestone investigation is to be commended. Doubtless similar exercises have been performed in several other parishes, but where they have not there must be a good case for something similar. This particular article therefore offers a useful model. It is unlikely that we could provide room for all such future examples in *The Devon Historian* - space is limited and we must give consideration to variety - but there must undoubtedly be value in parishes gathering respective data, and in each case either producing a small private publication or at least depositing copies of a well-typed account in secure places. Future Devon historians would thank them for leaving such accounts of the direct effects of war, and of ways of life that are still remembered but have already ceased to be common.

THE EXPORT TRADE IN NORTH DEVON EARTHENWARE, 1780-1840

Michael Nix

Archaeological evidence suggests that the north Devon pottery industry originated in late medieval times, although the coastwise distribution of its wares was not fully evolved until after 1660. Grant states that markets in earthenware were opened up by masters of small vessels who advantageously linked this with other trades such as the carriage of Welsh coal. A bi-directional overseas trade was also developed, but relied on merchants who could invest in valuable return cargoes such as tobacco. Following the collapse of the transatlantic markets during the eighteenth century, and suffering from the effects of increased competition from Staffordshire potters, north Devon's trade in earthenware contracted until only the South West, south Wales and its own hinterland remained.¹

The brown earthenware pottery industry was of considerable importance to the economy of north Devon, particularly to Bideford and Barnstaple. In both towns production was located on the northern side, to avoid sparks being carried into residential area by the prevailing winds.² There were also village potteries, with access to the river and sea, recorded at Instow in 1790 and Fremington in 1800.³ In the manufacturing process Fremington clay was used throughout, although white ball-clay, gravels and galena were employed. Water and pipe-clay were mixed to form a creamy slip into which the pottery was dipped, then designs were scratched through. The end product was known as *scrafitto* ware. Coarse-wares – large pans, pickling steans for pilchards, salting vessels, ovens, etc – were produced by mixing clay with gravel taken from the River Torridge at Landeross. It was believed that the end product was more heat resistant and stronger for this mixture. Lead ore of a type known as galena was the main ingredient of the glaze.⁴

At the turn of the nineteenth century the trade in earthenware was flourishing. In 1792 John Watkins of Bideford reported that the demand for earthenware 'in various parts of the kingdom, is constantly great'. He continued, with some partiality, that the earthenware made here is generally supposed to be superior to any other of the kind, and this is accounted for, from the peculiar excellence of the gravel which this river affords, in binding the clay. That this is the true reason, seems clear, from the fact, that though the potteries at Barnstaple make use of the same sort of clay, yet their earthenware is not held in such esteem at Bristol, etc., as that of Bideford.⁵

Maton observed five years later that clay was obtained from Fremington at the 'easy' price of half-a-crown a ton.⁶ Taking into consideration labourers' earnings of no more than six shillings a week, the speed of manufacturing individual articles and other expenses which were 'trifling', there were, according to Watkins, great profits to be made. This was 'evidenced by several persons having risen within a few years, from the greatest obscurity and poverty, to wealth and consequence of no small extent'.⁷

North Devon ware was produced in a number of small 'pot-works' which Marshall considered added to the 'remarkably forbidding' look of the town of Bideford. 'In the vacant spaces between the streets', he complained:

immense piles of furze faggots rise, in the shape of houses, and make the houses

themselves appear more like hovels than they really are. The dangerous piles of fuels are for the use of the pottery, for which I believe this town is celebrated, chiefly, or wholly, the coarser kind of earthenware.⁸

These piles were a potential fire risk in the town. In 1747, five potters were fined five shillings each for stacking their fuel dangerously and were compelled to promise to keep their ricks at a safe distance from the earthenware kilns, chimneys and houses.⁹

One pottery, in the appropriately named Potter's Street, now North Street, in Bideford, was advertised for sale in 1808 and included large areas of ground nearby for storage of faggots and other fuels. It was probably established in the 1650s and possessed two dwelling houses, a workshop, drying houses with chambers over and other outhouses. The location close to the town, it was noted, was a convenient situation for passing trade with the town's people and for the export trade.¹⁰

Such potteries would have worked all the year round but were subject to seasonal fluctuations. Shorter hours of daylight during the winter months and the difficulties of

Table 1. The number of monthly cargoes and consignments of earthenware exported from Bideford during 1806 (North Devon Record Office, R2378A/78)

MONTH	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
CARGO	1/2*	3/-	5/2	10/1	5/-	6/5	6/1	8/2	7/1	6/1	4/-	2/1

* Number of cargoes/consignments

Cargo = single commodity carried in vessel

Consignment = two or more different types of commodity carried as a single cargo by a vessel

drying the wares slowed down production work.¹¹ Table 1 confirms Grant's assertion that most earthenware was shipped during the summer months, partially answering the need to avoid damage in wintery, storm-tossed seas. It can also be observed from the table that after the lull between November and February, the month in which frosts were most likely to delay the drying process, the pace of trade began to increase. The winter's production could at last be distributed.

In the nineteenth century the pot-works located on the Taw and Torridge made jugs, baking-dishes, flower-pots, butter-pots, lamps, cups and so forth for the neighbourhood. Some potteries, such as Fremington, manufactured pilchard steans or pots for the Cornish fishing industry and ovens for Wales. Although works in the potteries revolved around the demands of dairying and of kitchen and table, there was also some ornamental and decorative work which was generally for local consumption. Bideford specialised in harvest pitchers, Barnstaple in puzzle-jugs.¹²

One of the most striking features of Table 2 is the considerable expansion of trade between the early 1790s and the mid 1800s. Two important aspects have, however, to be borne in mind. The first is that the data for the 1791-93 period may be incomplete as they are drawn from departure reports in the *Trewmans Exeter Flying Post*. These are not consistent in the early 1790s except between June 1791 and July 1793 and even then there is some evidence overall for internal inconsistency. The second aspect is that some earthenware consignments shipped to Bristol are not recorded, since they

are lost in the all embracing term 'sundry goods'. Be that as it may, in 1808 Vancouver remarked that the earthenware trade had increased considerably over the previous few years.¹³

Table 2. The number of cargoes and consignments of earthenware and tiles exported from Bideford and Barnstaple in three sample periods between 1791 and 1812 (*Treeman's Exeter Flying Post* and North Devon Record Office, R2379A/Z8)

Port	Barnstaple		Bideford	
	1791-3+	1791-3	1805-7	1810-12
Earthenware	42/18*	54/4	129/24	111/12
Earthenware/tiles	3/-	-	-	-
Tiles	-/1	-	-	-/1
Total	45/19	54/4	129/24	111/13

+ sample period begins July and ends June

* Number of cargoes/consignments

Cargo = single commodity carried in vessel

Consignment = two or more different types of commodity carried as a single cargo by a vessel

Although the overall direction of trade had not changed significantly between 1791-1793 and 1810-1812, the markets in both Wales and the South West had been boosted. Swansea, Pembroke and Carmarthen were significant importers, a situation similar to that of the mid-seventeenth century. The number of cargoes imported into Swansea increased between the latter two sample periods, almost certainly an indication of an expanding market during a period of industrial growth.¹⁴ The coal-port of Newport was also expanding and attracting quantities of north Devon earthenware. The number of cargoes imported into Pembroke, however, was declining, possibly a consequence of the redirecting of Bideford's culm trade eastwards along the Bristol Channel. Further markets were found on the coast of west Wales, particularly Cardigan and Aberystwyth.

In Cornwall, north Devon earthenware was valued by fisherman and domestic consumer alike. The port of Padstow had been a large importer of earthenware in the second half of the seventeenth century,¹⁵ and continued to retain a place in the trades of both Bideford and Barnstaple during the period under review. In numbers of cargoes, Fowey was also of some importance. During the French Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars, restrictions were imposed which limited the shipment of pilchards to the Continent. In consequence, immense quantities of fish taken were pressed for their oil. This train-oil was burned in earthenware lamps. The oil, purchased in Cornish towns, was 'brought to market by fishwives in big jars, and retailed to the country people who included it amongst their weekly purchases'.¹⁶ Some of these lamps and pots were undoubtedly supplied by the potteries of Bideford and Barnstaple.

Bideford exported earthenware to the major population centres of Bristol and Plymouth. These two places absorbed about 15 per cent of the total cargoes and consignments in the period 1805-7. Occasional cargoes were also sent to one or two of the English Bristol Channel ports. Although the ports of the north Somerset coast had provided regular, if small, markets for earthenware in the seventeenth century, this was no longer the case at the end of the eighteenth. Since there were few trading links in other commodities with this region, there was little opportunity for expansion. There must also have been strong competition from the potteries of Bristol and the Midlands.

The most significant development of trade in the eighteenth century, besides the collapse of the American market, was the diminution of the Irish trade. Grant calculated that in 1699 the number of parcels of earthenware sent to Ireland from north Devon was about half the total sent from London and the outports.¹⁷ During the period 1791-1793 only one-fifth of all earthenware cargoes and consignments which departed Barnstaple were for Irish destinations. Most accompanied barrels of beer. This decline was apportioned by Grant to the competition from Staffordshire potters who, by expeditious use of canals, were able to transport their wares to Liverpool, for eventual distribution to Ireland.

Although a single consignment of tiles was despatched from Bideford to Cork at the end of March 1811 it had, in fact, arrived four days earlier from Barnstaple in a vessel employed in the oak bark trade. Charbonnier stated in 1906 that a large number of north Devon churches still contained embossed tiles made in wooden moulds of Fremington clay and Bideford gravel (gravel-tempered clay) and then glazed with galena. Some tiles identical to those made in the North Walk Pottery, Barnstaple, in the latter half of the seventeenth century, were to be seen in Bristol Cathedral.¹⁸ Barnstaple continued exporting tiles into the early part of the nineteenth century, albeit on a limited scale. One consignment was sent to Carmarthen in the summer of 1792, others to Waterford and Wicklow.

So who were the potters of north Devon and how were they, as manufacturers, directly involved in the earthenware carrying trade? In 1792 the *Universal British Directory* recorded five potters at work in Bideford – Henry Cadd, John Jewell, Philip Tallin, John Tuckett and Mary Carder – and one in Barnstaple – Margaret Besley – exclusive of the earthenware-man George Hunger. The Bideford ship register also revealed a further potter, George Spray, working in Bideford in 1786 and another, William Lovering (of Litchdon Street), at Barnstaple in 1797. Later, between 1803 and 1813, the same source records two other Bideford potters, Thomas Anthony and William Carder. The Barnstaple customs out-port letter book also refers to George and William Fishley of Instow in 1787.

Of all these potters, it is certain that all except Henry Cadd had shares in vessels owned in either Bideford or Barnstaple (see Table 3). In the two decades after 1786 the names of both Carders, Anthony, Jewell, Spray, Tallin and Tuckett appear in the Bideford ship register on twenty-eight separate occasions. In 1823, a trade directory listed four potteries in Potter's Street and a further three in East-the-Water and one in the Strand.¹⁹ In Barnstaple only one earthenware manufacturer, James Randell of Castle Street, was recorded. Fifteen years later *Robson's Directory* listed two potters in Bideford – Edward Petherick and John Tucker – both of East-the-Water – and two in Barnstaple – Elias Rendell of Lichdon Street and John Rendell of North Walk. With the exception of two vessels, the *Alfred* and the *Hebe*, shown in the table below, the tonnage of most craft owned by the potters was comparatively small. The mean regis-

Table 3. Potters with shares in Bideford and Barnstaple vessels between 1786 and 1841 (Devon Record Office, 3319 S1-3; 3318 S1-2; Public Record Office CUST 69/68, 7 January 1788; Robin Craig's Reconstituted Barnstaple Ship Register)

Name of potter	Ship registry no/year	Vessel Name	Tonnage	Period of Ownership
Bideford				
Thomas Anthony	1/1813	<i>Regent</i>	58	1813-1815
	8/1816	<i>Thomas & Anne</i>	36	1816-1820
Mary Carder	16/1786	<i>Nancy</i>	19	1786-1787
	20/1786	<i>Mary & Anne</i>	24	1786-1795
	4/1794	<i>Blessing</i>	23	1794-nk
	4/1799	<i>Alfred</i>	134	1799-1810
William Carder	1/1808	<i>Annabella</i>	66	1808-1810
	1/1809	<i>Three Sisters</i>	37	1809-1818
	17/1814	<i>William</i>	34	1814-1815
	7/1815	<i>Providence</i>	25	1815-1819
John Jewell	4/1816	<i>Dove</i>	32	1816-1819
	16/1786	<i>Nancy</i>	19	1786-1787
	10/1786	<i>Mary & Anne</i>	24	1786-1795
	5/1788	<i>Thomas</i>	34	1788-1801
George Spray	6/1790	<i>George</i>	24	1790-1806
	4/1786	<i>Mary</i>	28	1786-1792
	19/1786	<i>Thomasine</i>	20	1786-1787
	27/1786	<i>Hannah</i>	45	1786-1802
	4/1788	<i>Eagle</i>	22	1788-1800
	5/1788	<i>Thomas</i>	34	1788-1801
	3/1793	<i>Betsy</i>	27	1793-1802
	2/1798	<i>Hebe</i>	122	1798-1810
2/1800	<i>United Brothers</i>	85	1800-1803	
John Tallin	4/1789	<i>Sparrow</i>	11	1789-1792
John Tucker	7/1832	<i>Albion</i>	53	1832-1839
John Tuckett	4/1786	<i>Mary</i>	28	1786-1792
	28/1786	<i>Active</i>	36	1786-1798
	1/1788	<i>Point</i>	16	1788-1790
	6/1791	<i>John & Susanna</i>	28	1791-1793
Barnstaple				
George Fishley	10/1787	<i>Sparrow</i>	11	1787-1789
William Fishley	10/1787	<i>Sparrow</i>	11	1787-1789
John Lovering	6/1797	<i>Venus</i>	25	1797-NK

tered tonnage was calculated at 33 tons. Both shipowning potters and the shippers of earthenware preferred the use of small sloops; one, the appropriately named *Sparrow*, measured only 11 tons. Of the sixty-two vessels which departed Bideford in 1806 with cargoes of earthenware, the tonnage of thirty-five fully-laden vessels is known.²⁰ Excluding the large 118 ton schooner *Enterprise*, it was found that the average tonnage was also 33 tons. A further sixteen partially-laden vessels averaged 55 tons.

In the seventeenth century the tonnage of north Devon vessels employed in the earthenware trade ranged from under 10 tons to over 30 tons. The reason given by Grant for this preference was that vessels fitted the scale of the ports they used and could sail into narrow harbours and up shallow rivers.²¹ The significance of the size is also related to the actual volume of earthenware exported at any one time. Output and hold space needed to match closely to ensure the profitable operation of vessels. Thus, the average size of the earthenware carriers using the port of Bideford, and the small size of vessels listed in the table above, suggests that some north Devon potters bought shares in shipping as a means of extending their trade, rather than simply as a means to invest.

The evidence which directly links ownership of Bideford and Barnstaple vessels by potters to the carrying of earthenware goods is limited. Only one small vessel, the *George*, partly owned by John Jewell, was operating during the Bideford bench-mark year of 1806 used for this study. She was employed in the south Wales limestone trade.²² It is known, however, that two potters, the Fishleys of Instow, bought shares in the *Sparrow* with the intention of engaging their little craft in distributing their wares. She was first registered in the port of Barnstaple in February 1787. George Fishley was innovative. He was the first Fremington potter to use coal, brought in from the Forest of Dean, to fire his pots. He also began utilising manganese brown and the addition of modelled or cast ornament in pipe-clay, or mixed red and white clay, which gave 'this ingenious craftsman a scale of colour similar to Toft ware'.²³

As a shipowner George was not so successful. Some time after the registration of the *Sparrow* he was visited by John Bray, another shareholder from St Gennys in Cornwall, and John Baker, a ship's master. He was told that the vessel was to be taken out of the earthenware trade and Baker was to replace the present master. Two other owners had agreed to this arrangement and the vessel was employed in running contraband. Fishley did not know that Bray was a 'smuggler of great notoriety ... having been frequently detected in illicit practices'. Eventually, the *Sparrow* was returned to Fremington Pill where she was seized by excise men.

In an attempt to return her to the legal and peaceful earthenware trade, Fishley purchased her for five guineas at an official auction. At the same time he bought out all the other part-owners. Although the customs collector at Barnstaple was sympathetic, the law prevented the potter from operating the craft, as she stood condemned in the 'old certificate of registry'.²⁴ The *Sparrow* was now sold to the Bideford potter John Tallin. His partnership with the ship's master, John Pearce, lasted until 1792 when the vessel was broken up. Other potters with shares in local vessels were as unlucky as the Fishleys. Of eighteen vessels registered by them in Bideford before 1801, one-third were lost by ship-wreck.

Thus, although the earthenware trade of north Devon was flourishing at the beginning of the nineteenth century, the geographical distribution of its wares had diminished since the seventeenth. The overseas trade, linked to the importation of such items as tobacco, was finished and the Irish trade much reduced. Only south Wales, Devon, Cornwall and Bristol remained as significant importers. Rural communities in

the three counties continued to make use of coarse earthenware and helped to keep a 'rump' of a pottery industry in existence, which, according to Grant, 'had made no significant concessions to progress'.²⁵ The potters themselves maintained an interest in the shipping which was used to carry their wares and, in many cases, invested in vessels with capacities commensurate with the scale of the trade. The vessels they owned were considered a part of their business and not just as a source of a profit-making investment.

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'THE SERIOUS HISTORIAN OF THE VILLAGE': RURAL TRADITION AND CHANGE AS RECORDED BY HENRY WILLIAMSON

A.J.H. Jackson

'Tales of a Devon village with its companion *Life in a Devon village*, is compiled from material gathered together originally in two books between 1919 and 1929, and called *The village book* and *The labouring life*. Both dealt with an observed and authenticated period that has now passed away – the first half of the interval between the two industrial wars of the twentieth century'.¹ Thus wrote Henry Williamson in the opening pages of *Tales of a Devon Village* and *Life in a Devon village*, which found publication in 1945. Collectively, the books read as a montage incorporating part-fictional character studies and short stories with the passionately-expressed descriptions of landscape, nature and elements that typify Williamson's well-known works. In addition, there is an element of less prominence, but of equal significance; for within these writings Williamson often portrays local circumstances as symbolic of the gathering pace of change being experienced across rural England in the two decades following the First World War. As Williamson states at one point, he considered himself 'the serious historian of the village'.

Thus, the village as chronicled by Williamson might be read as a microcosm and as an allegory of those extensive areas of rural Devon in the early twentieth century that were at once remote but which were also 'opening up'.² In the works Williamson outlines a range of 'traditional' characteristics including dialect, custom, attitude, institutional allegiance and dependence, that combined to symbolise historical senses of identity and attachment felt by the villagers towards their local community and their surroundings. Williamson indicates, then, what appeared to be the consequences for those senses as traditional life was confronted by the inexorable forces of change.

The tradition

The village in 1919, which Williamson chose to call Ham, had inherited senses of attachment and identity that were effected by its intrinsic self-sufficiency. The many components of its community appeared to render the village highly self-contained: church, chapel and school, with their respective councils; a shop and post office; a blacksmithy; two public houses; a flourmill; and a policeman. Furthermore, in the fields and farms around the village was to be found the primary source of employment. This high level of service and agricultural work provision provided both the socio-economic and the psychological aspects which gave the individual community members their strong sense of place. In Williamson's account, three manifestations of this sense are most in evidence: attitude, dialect and custom.

In attitude, the villagers' perspectives were generally directed inwards; apart from occasional references to smaller hamlets nearby, and the annual visit to the regional fair, Williamson suggests that the villagers had limited socio-spatial horizons and little apparent need to interact with the outside world. Their dependent attachment to and integral involvement within the self-contained community in which they lived and worked had long orientated their attention, gossip and folklore towards that

environment and not to the outside 'it was in the times of which I write, still in the deep country'.¹ For the women:

church on Sunday, the September Fair "in to town", a parish meeting or Jumble Sale or Mother's Outing, gave only occasional opportunities for using their mental faculties. There was no social life in those days; no parish hall, no Women's Institute. Strangers were still the objectives of curiosity and speculation;²

for the men:

in the Higher and Lower Houses [the two inns], I heard many tales of falcons, foxes, badgers, ravens and men, which I afterwards wrote as short stories;³

- what they heard their fathers tell before them, were the subjects of politics, on the questions of the fields and the village each man had a deep store of knowledge.⁴

Overlapping with attitude was dialect. Almost all the words Williamson highlights relate to that rural landscape within which the villagers were integrated, and particularly to the wildlife and the working regime therein; for example: 'holm-scritch' (missel thrush), 'fitchey' (stoat), 'lamb's tongue' (spurrey), 'dreschel' (flail), 'dimmity' (twilight) and 'weest' (dreary).⁵ Moreover, dialect acted as a sub-conscious badge of 'membership' which members of the community could relate to, and with which they felt comfortable, although they were conscious also that it separated themselves from 'outsiders':

dialect words - they hid them sometimes from strangers, believing them to be inferior, some of them probably in use before the Norman Conquest, others as old ... The exact and simple speech of their forefathers, until they understood I was finding value in it, was deprecated.⁶

Emerging simultaneously from the institutional and occupational bonds within the community was custom. The church in itself was an important social focus, but more vitally, dates in the ecclesiastical year combined with those of the agricultural year to provide a localised calendrical custom. Many of the village's official functions such as church festivals, market days and holidays were determined by this custom, and it was these that yielded the much appreciated opportunities for leisure and social interaction that were necessary to further the ethos of the self-contained community, and attachment towards it:

the important days in the village were those which were "a bit more lively" than usual work-a-days: Easter Sunday, especially for the village maids, for them the church was full of flowers, and the thought of the Bank Holiday on the morrow ... Whit Sunday and Monday, for the same reasons, but not with the same fervour of Spring, the August Fete, pronounced Feet, in the glebe field, held nearly every year in order to raise money for the new church work ... Then there was Christmas Day - the day of great eating, whose jollity and feelings of brotherhood were enhanced by going to church in the morning, since contrast was the salt of life. But Barum September Fair was the greatest event of the village year.⁷

The change

Through the two books it transpires that the socio-economic basis for the self-sufficient community that had cultivated its senses of identity and attachment was under threat. In the following three passages, Williamson effectively and poignantly conveys many of the key features of a local society that was in a period of transformation:

I found the village, where I had settled, to be full of petty jealousy and conflicts, the inevitable condition of a remote living where every other man was a

small owner of property, where the old squire had departed, and only a few went to church on Sunday morning, or the chapel in the afternoon,⁸

- during the decade following the Great War, I watched the motor car, from being a rare sight, become commonplace, even a nuisance in the village. The ancient stagnation of the parish was stirred by the coming of the wire wheel in place of the wooden wheel. The schoolboys, sons of labourers, became masons and mechanics earning thrice their father's wages. They owned motor cycles, and bought their own cottages ... young men of freedom and savings increasing in the bank, no longer touched their hats or added "zur" of immemorial custom,⁹

- past cottages, derelict of thatch and browed with ivy - the home of hundreds of sparrows and starlings - when I had first come to live in Devon, but now sold and restored and let furnished to produce in two days of the summer season more than their yearly rent before the war.¹⁰

The whole socio-economic base, therefore, was undergoing fundamental change. For the older members of Ham, their world had been hierarchical, dependent, rigid and agricultural. For the younger folk, it was becoming more democratic, independent, mobile and materialistic.

There were various wide-ranging stimuli of change - mobility, mass communications, tourism, house-building, local democracy and agricultural decline - from which stemmed the focal features of life for rural society in the inter-war years. Improved mobility and communications had opened up wider horizons for work, had increased interaction outside the community, and had brought tourists and incoming settlers into the locality. The new motor transportation required mechanics, whilst, in addition, the expansion of the tourism and the housing sectors required other forms of service personnel. As a consequence, higher wages and freedom from the agricultural economy raised the expectation amongst villagers of property ownership rather than dependence upon the 'tied' cottage. More house-building was brought about to fulfil these expectations, driven also by a government subsidy for the improvement of the housing stock.¹¹ Furthermore, with the building boom, plots of land were often more profitable under construction than farmed, and the new small holders eager to speculate, and in concrete and asbestos rather than in the vernacular traditions of an earlier age.¹² Perhaps as the ultimate symbol of the functional shift of the village, there were plans to convert the still operable 'Charles II' millhouse into a modern boarding house.¹³ Also, in two lengthy chapters dealing with disputes over access to a well and the site of a public cemetery, Williamson explains how the local power and decision-making structure had been transformed. Hitherto, this structure had been localised, dominated by an autocratic figure who was at once parson, squire and major landowner, and who was supported by large farmers. Subsequently, the ownership of land had become more evenly distributed; power and responsibility had become designated within an interrelating hierarchy of councils stretching from parish, to rural district, to county, to central government; and at the base of the structure local representation had become more democratic, egalitarian and contentious.¹⁴

The sense of place that was once an inevitability brought about by the economic and social self-sufficiency of the village was being confronted. Attention and activity were beginning to relate relatively more to factors deriving from beyond the locality of the village. This was experienced first by the younger villagers as the most economically and socially active group, and the most open to opportunity. For them, the old attitudes of introvertedness, dependence and attachment to the local farming community and landscape were being weakened. Traditional forms of custom and

dialect were increasingly associated with the older folk rather than with the community as a whole – aspects that had been strongly tied up in an agricultural economy which was now less in command, and a church that was similarly in decline.¹⁷

Williamson's view

From the two books, some comparison can be made between the realities of change being experienced by the village – as noted by the author – and Williamson's attitude towards the significance of change. In this there is some contrast. With regard to the village, in none of Williamson's characters is there a fear of things new, or a consciousness of the accumulative detrimental effect that changes might have upon their community. Indeed, the inhabitants seem quite resigned and even content to take advantage of the new opportunities, with a significant number looking forward to 'the new cottages being built and the "opening up of the place" with the prospect of regular work'.¹⁸ Furthermore, the villagers are portrayed as being habitually used to the passing of old ways that had once played notable parts in community structure and identity. Reminiscences are made, amongst other things, about the healing power supplied by local 'white' witches, and the social policing by 'rough music' enforced by the villagers themselves.¹⁹

With regard to change, Williamson's attitude appears more ambivalent. On the one hand, he sympathises with the progress in that it was freeing the villagers from the poverty, dependence and deference of an earlier regime.²⁰ On the other hand, Ham had been Williamson's place of isolation, a retreat after his wartime experiences and his dissatisfaction with a short period of work in London.²¹ This solitude was now being threatened. Furthermore, he had difficulty in accepting the villager's eagerness to embrace the opportunities of the modern age, and he recognised the threat that his posed to the community with its simple and essential harmony of human and physical landscape. He was perhaps most comfortable with the wildlife, the landscape and the elements to which he devoted many tracts within his two books:

rejecting the harsh-bright mentality of the human world, I sought again in wave, tree and bird that land beyond the horizon; avoiding my fellow-men whose lives seemed to be based only on self-interest, on the little ego which did not even understand itself.²²

A biography of Williamson maintains that the contents of *Tales of a Devon village* and *Life in a Devon village* represent a far more accurate record of actual people and places than the author would admit to in the introductory notes to the two publications. Alongside other writings by Williamson, these books undoubtedly constitute a valuable regional literature resource, and, furthermore, a collection of works that has yet to receive adequate acclaim.²³

Local historians investigating the realities of village life in Devon between the wars might refer to detailed community study 'classics' like Williams's *Ashworthy* or Martin's *The shearers and the shorn*.²⁴ In *Tales of a Devon village* and *Life in a Devon village* Williamson succeeds in echoing and adding colour to many of the features of country life uncovered by such authoritative historical and sociological works. In a more allegorical manner, Williamson's writing conveys with similar power the dualism between the hold of tradition and the dynamism of change that characterised Devon village life in the inter-war years.

Notes and references

1. Williamson, Henry, *Tales of a Devon Village*. Faber & Faber, London, 1945, p.2; *Life in a Devon village*, Faber & Faber, London, 1945, p.6. These two works were a consolidation and reorganisation of earlier versions: *The village book*, Jonathan Cape, London, 1930; and *The labouring life*, Jonathan Cape, London, 1932.
2. *Life in a Devon village*, p.262. The author elucidates more fully on his two motives – as novelist and historian – in an opening note for *Labouring life*: '[it] is not intended as a guide to farmwork; it is a collection of short stories and sketches which have bases in reality, or what seemed to have happened in one village and its neighbourhood as seen through the author's eyes. Like its fellow, *The village book*, it is an imaginative work, created for two reasons: first, for the reader's entertainment; second, that the spirit and letter of village life in the decade following the Great War be contained for future students of English country life', p.9. Williamson's subject is the village and neighbourhood of Georgeham in north Devon.
3. 'Opening up' recurs as a term used by the villagers to describe the development and progress taking place locally, for example: *Tales of a Devon village*, p.136; *Life in a Devon village*, p.129.
4. *Life*, p.11.
5. *Ibid*, p.11.
6. *Ibid*, p.147.
7. *Ibid*, p.152.
8. *Ibid*, pp.9, 16, 128. A more lengthy compilation of 'provincialisms' is contained in *Labouring Life*, pp.450-4.
9. *Life in a Devon village*, p. 128.
10. *Life*, pp.185-6.
11. *Tales*, p.7.
12. *Life*, pp.28-9.
13. *Ibid*, p.235.
14. *Tales*, p.79.
15. *Ibid*, p.111; *Life*, p.29.
16. *Life*, p.232.
17. *Tales*, pp.32-51, 125-78.
18. *Life*, pp.186, 288.
19. *Ibid*, p.129.
20. *Ibid*, pp.159, 204.
21. *Ibid*, pp. 27-9.
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THE PARISH REGISTERS OF WIDWORTHY AND OFFWELL 1555-1835

Edwin Haydon

The village of Wilmington lies astride the main road from Honiton to Axminster in east Devon. Until recently the boundary between the two parishes of Widworthy and Offwell ran up the centre of that road and together they covered an area of some 3,500 acres. Their combined populations reached a peak in 1841 of 695 people, of whom about one fifth lived in Wilmington village.

As Vicar-General of the Church of England, Thomas Cromwell issued a mandate in 1538 ordering every incumbent to keep a record of all baptisms, marriages and burials which took place in his parish. Those records were for the most part made on odd scraps of paper. That haphazard system was rectified by a further order made in 1598 which ordered each parish to purchase more durable parchment registers and to copy the earlier records into those registers. And so for nearly three centuries from the mid-sixteenth to the mid-nineteenth the parish registers are in practice the principal source of knowledge of population trends in early modern England.

To study the demographic history of Wilmington it was, therefore, necessary to analyse the registers of both parishes. Both have good continuous runs of entries, apparently somewhat of a rarity: those of Widworthy from 1544, and those of Offwell from 1551, up to the present day. The cut-off point in both analyses was 1837 when the civil system of registrations, combined with the detailed decennial Census Enumerators' Books from 1841, form better bases for demographic studies.¹

Certain problems are inherent in any study of parish demography² and this study is no exception. Both parishes have small populations and even lumped together their total population falls well below the generally accepted optimum of a thousand people for detailed parish register analysis. Of the possible causes of defects in the registration, these particular registers appear to pass most tests in that they cover the whole period, are free from any missing pages and have only a few illegible entries. Nor do the incumbents over the years give any sign of absence or of apathy, indeed some seem to be zealous in their recording. The parishioners also do not appear to have been indifferent or hostile to the religious celebration of vital events; Widworthy was a squirearchy and the Compton Census of 1676 records no breath of non-conformity in either parish.

Unfortunately this first impression of the relative reliability of the two parishes' registers is not confirmed by a closer examination. Both must have suffered as elsewhere during the two notoriously turbulent periods of our national history: the reigns of Edward VI and of Mary from 1547 to 1558 and the Civil War and Commonwealth from 1642 to 1660. Indeed the incumbent at Widworthy was defrocked on Mary's accession to the throne as 'uxoratus'.

Both Widworthy and Offwell parishes were created out of the large original parish of the adjacent Colyton, which was first studied by Professor Wrigley and subsequently by him and other members of the Cambridge Group.³ Peter Razzell compared entries in the Census Enumerators' Books of 1851 with the baptism registers of forty-five sample parishes to establish the proportion of cases found in the census but not in the registers.⁴ Colyton was among this sample and the percentage of cases in that

parish not in the registers descended from 34.3% in the decade 1781-90 to 15.2% in the last period studied, from 1831-34. It is probable that a similar level of under-registration obtained for Widworthy and Offwell.

Methodology

The main method for investigating the demographic history of a parish from its registered is aggregative analysis. It has been advocated for a long time with detailed instructions by the Cambridge Group for the History of Population and Social Structure.⁵ The numbers of males and females baptised or buried each month were recorded and totalled for each decade from 1555 to 1835 for both parishes. The number of marriages each month over the same period were likewise totalled. Those crude figures, without any adjustment for under-registration, of baptisms, marriages and burials for the two parishes combined have been plotted on a graph (Table 1) in the form of nine-year moving averages which are more likely to reveal longer term trends.⁶

Baptisms and Burials

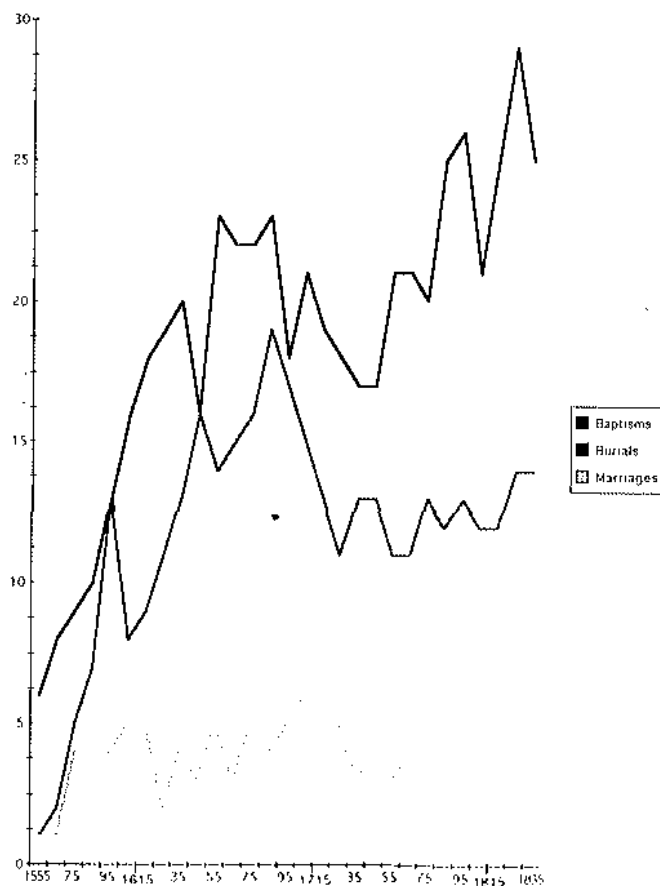
Unfortunately this graph reveals three rather different trends. The baptisms suggest that the population of the two parishes rose rapidly until the later seventeenth century, then levelled off until the later eighteenth century before rising again. The burials imply that after rising sharply to the later seventeenth century, the population fell in the early eighteenth century and then remained unchanged for the next hundred years. From the marriages alone one would infer that the population stagnated throughout this period.

Almost certainly the main explanation for these discrepancies is the omission of a substantial proportion of these vital events from the pages of these parish registers. Professor Wrigley and Dr Schofield have long argued that there was a steady deterioration in registration accuracy during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and used increasing ratios to account for this.⁷ But their assumptions have been questioned recently by Dr Razzell, who has argued that most burial registers suffered much more from under-registration than did the baptism ones and that there was a tendency for the quality of this registration to improve in the early nineteenth century and not to deteriorate further.⁸ The crude data for Widworthy and Offwell plotted in Table 1 support Razzell's interpretation, but unfortunately one can only guess at the extent of the omissions.

Child Mortality

The mortality of children may be assessed by linking the baptisms and burials of those named in the registers and then grouping the children within certain periods. For this exercise the writer made an alphabetical index of every person recorded in the registers over the period and then picked out those who had been buried by the age of puberty, which was taken to be 14 years of age. Over the three centuries spanned by this analysis the average rate of child mortality rose from 0.57% in the last quarter of the sixteenth century to 0.76% in the seventeenth century, and higher still to 0.80% in the eighteenth century. There was a decline to 0.62% in the first third of the nineteenth century, an improvement but still worse than the sixteenth century. Burial registration may, however, have failed in the second half of the sixteenth century, usually a time of heavy mortality.⁹

Table 1. Widworthy and Offwell, Baptisms, Marriages and Burials (9 year moving averages at 10 year intervals).



Dates of Birth and Death

For six years in the mid-seventeenth century, from 1654-9, the date of birth as well as the date of baptism is recorded in the Offwell register. From that record the average age at baptism was twenty-four days. Another spate of such diligence was initiated on 15 September 1774, when Frances, the daughter of the Reverend John Bradford Copleston, rector of Offwell, and of his wife Margaret, was baptised, and continued for a decennium. The average age at baptism had by then, over a century later, risen to forty-one days. Clearly parents had become rather lax at presenting their children at the font – a habit which was in line with national experience. Burial normally follows soon after death.¹²

Mean Age at First Marriage

The average age of men at marriage is difficult to calculate because it is only in the last century and a half that one can trace both the baptism of the groom and the marriage. However, excluding two widowers or old bachelors aged 35 and 42 years respec-

tively, between 1685 and 1835 the average age of men on first marriage was 23.5 years. The figures available for calculating the average age of brides on first marriage are somewhat more plentiful: over the two centuries from 1637 to 1835, if one excludes ten widows or old maids aged 31 years or more, the average age of women on marriage was 24.3 years, marginally greater than that of men. These male and female ages at first marriage are comparable with national norms.

At Colyton women during the period from 1560 to 1647 had a mean age at first marriage of 26.5 years to 27.5 years, when it rose to 30 years and was actually three years higher than the age of men. The average age of women on first marriage remained at over 25 years until 1800.¹³

Families

The baptism and marriage registers were studied throughout the period and those families of at least three children of the same parents were listed. Where two children of one family were baptised on the same day the presumption is likely that they were twins. When two children of the same sex in a family bear the same Christian name the presumption is very strong that the first had died before the second was baptised.

The average family size appeared to grow in the second half of the eighteenth century from 3-4 children to 4-5 children. That observation is guarded, bearing in mind the rules for presuming that a family is complete: firstly from the date of marriage until one of the couple had died or the wife had reached the age of 45 years; alternatively from the date of baptism of the first child to the end of the wife's procreative period. Those rules presuppose that the couple were married in the parish and stayed there. At Colyton women marrying before 30 years of age had 6.4 children before the mid-seventeenth century, between 4.2 and 4.4 during the next hundred years or so, and 5.9 after that until 1837.¹⁴ The average interval between the births of children in the same family steadily decreased from 39 months in the sixteenth century to 38 months in the seventeenth century, then down to 34 months in the eighteenth century, and finally 32 months in the nineteenth century. Those averages support the presumed effect of breast-feeding as a means of birth control: the descending scale might indicate an increasing use of 'sop' or 'gruel' for infants in place of breast-feeding.

Prenuptial Pregnancy

The practice of ensuring that the bride-to-be was fertile before embarking on matrimony was still very much alive among the agricultural community in east Devon only thirty years or so ago. Over the period from the mid-sixteenth century to 1837 nearly 16% of marriages were followed by the baptism of a child within a period of one to eight months. Indeed at Widworthy there were two cases in 1593 and again in 1597 where marriage of the parents followed the baptism of their child (*legitimatio per subsequens matrimonium*). That percentage is supported by historical evidence elsewhere since it can be shown that nationally 15% of brides were pregnant. In nearby Colyton, however, the percentage of prenuptial pregnancies was always much higher: during the period from 1538 to 1799 the rate was 46.2%.¹⁵ In view of these prenuptial pregnancies it is reasonable to assume that many more women were sexually experienced before marriage.

Illegitimacy

The Cambridge Group recently revised its rules so that one not only counts as illegitimate those labelled in the baptismal registers as 'base-born' but also those where only the mother's name is recorded. During the period of a hundred years from 1580 to 1697 the percentage of illegitimate children appears to be 4.7% of the total bap-

tisms for the two parishes. In the next hundred years that percentage fell to 3.8% and in the period from 1780 to 1837 to 2.6%. The falling percentage may be due to moral disapproval and so omission rather than to any improvement in morality or greater accuracy on the part of the incumbents and their clerks. In Colyton the percentage of bastards was much higher: in the period from 1691 to 1740 the figure was 6.4%, from 1741 to 1790 the figure was 7.8% but from 1811 to 1840 the figure fell to 3.2%.¹⁴

Life periods

In considering the lifespan of men and women from the mid-sixteenth to the early nineteenth centuries one must first define the age limits of an adult man and woman. Those limits were fixed between 15 and 69 years: the first because it followed the earlier upper limit fixed for children, that is at puberty; and the latter was adopted from the biblical 'three score years and ten'. Men and women in the seventeenth and later centuries did live beyond that age but by any standard their age was exceptional and consideration of them is reserved to later in this study. There is a further limitation in that this type of analysis can only proceed when both the baptismal and burial dates of each person are ascertainable. One notices a certain variance in the registers when an age is claimed for a person buried and one's own calculation from that person's baptism to burial. For obvious reasons the latter calculation is preferred. On those bases every person who died between the ages of 15 and 69 years was recorded, the date of birth being estimated to the nearest year from baptism.

In the late sixteenth and throughout the seventeenth centuries the average life span of men, who died between the ages of 15 and 59, was 37.7 years and that of women 30.7 years. During the eighteenth century the average male life span was 35.7 years and that of the female 38.6 years. During the first third of the nineteenth century the average man lived for 43.1 years and the average woman for 42.3 years. It is remarkable that only in the eighteenth century did the women outlive the men. Secondly there is a distinct hiccup in the average of the male life span for that very century: one would on a progression expect a life span of 40 years whereas there was instead a worsening trend.

Professor Wrigley has considered the expectation of life at Colyton and found that the mid-point during the period from 1538 to 1624 was 43.2 years, during the period from 1625 to 1699 was 36.9 years and between 1700 and 1174 was 41.8 years.¹⁵

Longevity

As indicated above, men and women who reached the age of 70 years or more are now considered separately *ex honoris causa* and because their exceptional longevity would upset the calculation of the life span of the average mortal. At Widworthy in the second half of the seventeenth century seven men averaged 75.6 years at age of death. No women were recorded in that century as septuagenarians. During the eighteenth century on the other hand ten men averaged 80.4 years but nine women outlived them with an average of 87 years. That was indeed remarkable. Finally in the first third of the nineteenth century twenty-two men averaged 81.2 years and nineteen women averaged 80.5 years.

Conclusion

Although these two parishes, even combined, hardly form an adequate basis for such an exercise, it is hoped that this study may encourage others to analyse the registers of larger parishes with a view to a better comparison.

Acknowledgements

This study would not have been possible without the kind assistance of three authorities in this field: Professor Sir Anthony Wrigley set me on course to make the original aggregative analyses and encouraged my efforts; Dr Denis Mills gave me great help in my original attempt to analyse and record my figures; lastly Mr Tom Arkell has made me thoroughly revise my previous draft. To all three I am grateful.

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6. After compiling an aggregative analysis of the Offwell registers, the writer found to his chagrin that in 1968 A. Robson had also made an aggregative analysis of the Offwell registers. Subsequently the writer found that the work had been reported (Wrigley and Schofield, 1981, 485 and 492). The writer is not aware of the source which Robson used but happily the separate analyses in general concur.
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MEN OF THURLESTONE WHO DIED IN WORLD WAR II

Neville Oswald

The names of twelve Thurlestone men who gave their lives for their country in World War II are listed on a wooden tablet in the parish church. In order to give substance to this elegant yet rather impersonal monument, an attempt has been made to assemble some details of the twelve men from their families and friends, with a view to providing a lasting record of an important facet of the parish's heritage.

There remain a few villagers and other who, after a lapse of rather more than fifty years, can still recall some of the men who died and may even have retained treasured old letters, newspaper cuttings and photographs. Between them they were able to give fairly complete accounts of the men and their families, but details of their military or other service were sometimes hazy, except when a close relation had died. Additional information was obtained from the parish registers, which include the village of Thurlestone and the hamlets of Buckland and Bantham. The following details were obtained from these two sources.

John AUGER. Son of an East Allington man and Catherine, a Thurlestone girl. After his parents separated, he lived with his mother in Thurlestone. He joined the Devon Regiment and was killed in Italy during a beachhead landing ('Anzio) in June 1944. Aged 24, he was unmarried.

Peter CAMPBELL. From an old Bantham family. He worked for a trading company in Sumatra. When the Japanese captured Singapore, he joined the local Dutch Home Guard. During the invasion of Sumatra, he was killed by the Japanese.

Cecil EDGCOMBE. Buckland. Baptised 1904 – a brother of Edgar. One of three brothers whose family lived in a thatched cottage at Bantham. Engaged to Mary Snowden of Buckland. He was already in the Royal Navy when war broke out. He was killed in the Far East when his ship HMS *Dragonfly* was sunk by enemy action.

Edgar EDGCOMBE. Buckland. Baptised 1899. He joined the regular Army before the outbreak of war. He was killed in action, leaving his wife Anne and daughter Iris.

Peter INGRAM. Buckland. A stranger to Thurlestone, he married Doris Hannaford, a local girl. They had a small farm at Buckland. He joined the Army but was discharged on grounds of health and died soon afterwards. His widow Doris and daughter Hazel now live at Aveton Gifford.

George LUSCOMBE. Buckland. Born at Goveton in 1900. As a young man he served with the Royal Navy for 12 years. In 1939 he joined the Army (RASC), became an ambulance driver and took part in the relief of Belsen concentration camp in Germany. Soon after he became ill with tuberculosis and died in 1945. He was buried at Thurlestone.

John MITCHELMORE. Thurlestone. Baptised 1907. He was a Territorial in the Devon Regiment. Whilst training at Falmouth before going to India, he was accidentally killed by an army lorry in 1943. He was buried at Thurlestone. He left a widow, Audrey, and three sons one of whom, Charles, is now a parish councillor.

Harold PRETTYJOHN. Thurlestone. Baptised 1907. He joined the Royal Navy as a young lad and travelled the world. Early in the war he was appointed Chief Stoker on HMS *Glorious*, in which he was drowned when it was sunk by enemy action. Aged 33, he was unmarried.

Michael YEO. Lived in the Old Rectory, Thurlestone. His father had a family business in Plymouth. He joined the RNVR in 1940 and was killed in action in the Straits of Messina, Italy in 1943. He was unmarried.

Charles BLUNDELL. Son of a wealthy brewer in Kingsbridge, he lived in the family home on Yarmer, Thurlestone. Married Joan at Thurlestone in 1943. He joined the RNVR, becoming a gunnery officer. He was killed in action in one of HM Capital Ships.

Patrick COBB. Thurlestone. A very frequent holiday visitor to his relations, the Matthews, who lived at Seacombe on Yarmer, now divided into three. He joined the RNVR in 1939 and served in Motor Gun Boats, based at Dover. In July 1942, in command of 3 MGBs, he attacked a strong German force and died when his boat was sunk by enemy action. He was awarded the DSC. His widow Elizabeth lives in Kent.

Lawrence DAVIS. Worked on a farm at Bantham, at a time when several youths from an orphanage came to work in the fields. Nothing is known of his career in the Forces.

Perhaps the most striking feature of these records is the diversity of experience of this small group of men. Equally divided between the Army and the Royal Navy, they fought in home waters, in Germany, the Mediterranean and the Far East, and covered the Seven Seas. Some eight of them came from local rural stock, which for generations had enjoyed reasonable prosperity, based principally on farming. Three others were newcomers whose families were attracted partly by the golf club, which was opened in 1897, and occupied or built for themselves substantial houses nearby. The last was probably one of a small group of young men who came from an orphanage to work in the fields. No service details are known and, unless further information comes to light, the date and manner of his passing are unlikely to be forthcoming from official records.

The parish registers have been invaluable in tracing family connections, especially births and marriages. Determining the dates of deaths has presented unsurmountable difficulties, especially for those who died overseas. All twelve are recorded in the burial register but no less than eight of them were simply entered as 1942; since some of them were known to have died in other years, little reliance can be placed on the date given.

Conversations with elderly villagers and others have yielded a remarkably complete account of events so many years ago. Some of them were old enough to have known those who died and their families as individuals but, perhaps, were not then particularly interested in noting which of the services they had joined. Several of them remembered the laudable enthusiasm with which many young men rushed to join the colours when war threatened in 1939. Some of them had rarely if ever stepped beyond the county's boundaries; for them and for all those who followed it was an exciting experience. Yet a glance at the homes to which some of them were destined never to return, especially in Buckland, brings to mind the tragic losses their families sustained.

Acknowledgements

My sincere thanks go to Alice Bachelor, May Campbell, Elizabeth Cobb, Eileen Dayment, Christine Grace, Eileen Grant, Ben Horn, Peter Hurrell, Ella Jarvis, Charles Mitchelmore, Ida Smith, Evelyn Snowden and Jennifer Yeo without whose assistance this article could not have been written.

STOCKDALE'S DRAWINGS OF EARLY NINETEENTH-CENTURY DEVON

Todd Gray

Among the art collections at the Royal Cornwall Museum in Truro are six volumes of drawings attributed to F.W.L. Stockdale. These comprise pencil sketches, with some watercolours, of places in Cornwall and Devon done in the first half of the nineteenth century. Stockdale considered producing an illustrated History of Devon for which these drawings were intended. The drawings are of particular interest to those interested in buildings and gardens. Many have not been identified. This provisional list is offered to researchers in Devon who may want particulars of these drawings or who can offer help with identifying unknown drawings. The drawings are in a temporary arrangement and it is hoped that these will be reordered in the near future. The two drawings which have been reproduced are representative of the collection. Copyright remains with the Museum. The Art Curator can provide further details.

Volume one, all are of Devon except one

1. watercolour 'near Ashburton July 14', small cottage with fields
2. pencil, unknown thatched, three-storey building with mullion windows
3. pencil and watercolour, 'Whitchurch Devon'
4. pencil, sketch of unknown house
5. pencil, unidentified chapel or church
6. two pencil sketches: 'vicarage Littleham near Bideford Devon' and unidentified two-storey residential building and church tower peeping out over oak wood with field in foreground and sweep of ornamental tree-lined drive
7. two pencil sketches: 'new pond, Saltram Devon' and 'Parkham, Devon'
8. pencil, 'Bridwell, Devon'
9. pencil with watercolour, 'Saltram ...', small thatched cottage/gate house on right foreground and looking through two stone gates there is a run of water with a marsh and Saltram rising out of a wooded landscape
10. pencil sketch of St Michael's Mount
11. pencil, 'the lodge, Bishop Teignton'
12. pencil, 'Rydon, Kingsteignton'
13. partial pencil sketches, 'Oakelands, Okehampton' & 'house in Torquay'
14. pencil, 'Churchstanton ...', small residential building with surrounding trees
15. pencil with watercolour on both sides, 'Milton Abbott', pasture and cattle in foreground, pond to the right and rising out of a wood a large building, moorland sharply rising behind
16. pencil, 'Chaltoncourt Tiverton, Devon'
17. pencil, 'Coffinswell Barton'
18. pencil, with some brown wash, 'Dawlish', large two-storey building on right, with

atmospheric railway with train running across centre, beach in foreground and two figures with bathing machine and pencil, 'Hatherleigh, Devon', church

19. pencil, 'Stokeinteignhead, Devon', village scene and pencil, with brown wash, 'Mount Batten, Plymouth Sound', view of coast with small sailboat in centre
20. pencil with some wash, 'The ... Torquay Devon Sept[?] 53', large, two-storey country house, with towers on two ends and possible wing to back, stone, with trees prominently drawn
21. pencil, 'Babbacombe near Torquay Devon, August 6 42', beach scene with small boats and building on shore and an architectural feature at top of cliff
22. pencil, some shading, 'Coryton House near Axminster'
23. pencil, 'Sidbury, Devon', church in centre with buildings roughly drawn to left and right

Volume two, many unidentified and very rough sketches, probably a mixture of Devon and Cornwall, including, pencil, 'On the Dart Devon', river scene with three cottages on right-hand side of river and some nets and small craft and pencil, 'St Nicholas Island ...'

Volume three:

1. pencil, 'house with slate roof ... roses over the ... Dawlish', 'light lime tree', on right, 'rhododendron ...', to left of centre
two-storey house, with veranda, in centre of rising slope, heavily landscaped with ornamental trees
2. pencil, '... Ashprington from Totnes', two-storey house with circular drive in front, arched columned feature from house on left-side of picture
3. pencil, 'Teignmouth', two-storey building with veranda in front and first floor windows with rounded tops, series of curious roof pinnacles
4. pencil, 'Fuge from Dartmouth'
5. pencil, 'the Temple ... Mount Edgecombe', rough detail showing coastline and temple near centre
pencil, 'near Torquay', building rising out of wood
6. pencil with some brown wash, unidentified large stone L-shaped building
7. pencil, 'Okefield, Crediton', Italianate building, some detail of gardens
8. pencil, with some wash, 'Blaydon barton'
9. pencil, 'Oxenham's from Okehampton'
10. pencil, 'view at Plympton, Devon Nov. 2 1828'
11. pencil, 'Netherton, nr Honiton', L-shaped building with prominent two-storey Dutch gabled entry porch, limited detail on garden and pencil, 'Old tower Slapton near Dartmouth'
12. pencil, unknown street scene
13. pencil with some wash, '... near Modbury Devon October 18 1844', ... anton to Modbury', large [?]farmhouse
14. pencil, with some colour, 'South Molton', country lane with two cottages and pencil, 'Mrs Morshead, White ... slate', 'Widey from Plymouth', large two storey-country

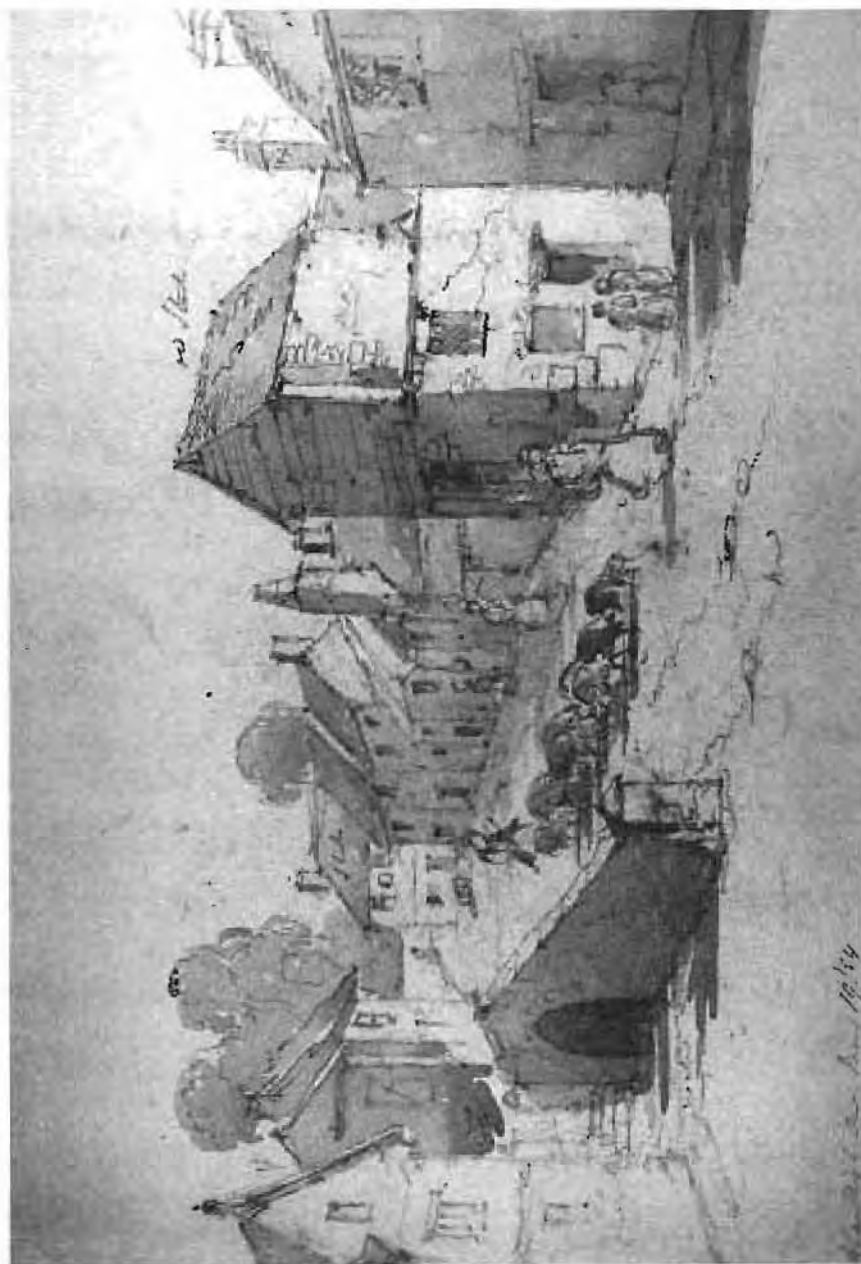
house with conservatory on one end and large wing on other, and(?) ha-ha

15. pencil, 'Montsford villas from Torquay', coastal sweep, [?]villa on right and in distance, with [?]bathing machine
16. pencil, unknown cottage with detailed garden
17. pencil, church on left, iron-railed fence, and large two-storied building [?]classical with two protruding wings
18. pencil, 'monastery of St Clare', and pencil, 'Wembury near Plymouth', view of church, countryside and sea
19. pencil, unknown, view of large house, with two towers, on estuary, high moorland rising up in background, possible village on shoreline, gardens drawn well
20. pencil, unknown castellated three-storied building
21. includes pencil, 'school at Tiverton', street scene with school
22. pencil, 'near Crediton', large tree in centre, church tower rising on left and sheep with attender on right

Volume four includes pencil, '... Bishopsteignton', large two-storied building, pond in foreground. some large trees on right and left hand sides; pencil, unknown, two-storied large house; pencil with some wash, '... near Crediton', large double-winged house, three stories; pencil with some wash, 'Wisdom, Cornwood'; pencil 'Loven tor, Berry Pomeroy'; pencil, 'St Nicholas Island and Mount Edcombe from the Hoe'.

Volume six includes

- pencil, 'Hurston', large cob building
- pencil, 'Teignmouth', view from Shaldon, with Teignmouth on far right background and one large house in centre background
- pencil, 'Awliscombe, Honiton', cottage with garden
- pencil, 'South Brent', church tower
- pencil with some wash, 'Dawlish', similar view to that in Volume one number 18
- pencil with some colour, '... ton House near Barnstaple', large classical house of two stories, projection on right side, ornamental lawn with a few specimen trees, possible church tower on left side
- pencil, 'Honlands, Dawlish', large two-storied house in ornamental landscaped grounds
- pencil, 'Feniton Court near Honiton', large two-storied house, church to left, some trees
- pencil, 'Cotleigh near Honiton, Devon, July 17 43', house with church tower
- pencil, 'Hauston Morton, Devon', rough sketch of house
- pencil with wash, 'Staverton Bridge, near Totnes Devon'
- pencil, with wash, 'Anstey Cove near Torquay'
- pencil, 'Teignmouth,' rough drawing of boats and shoreline.
- pencil, 'Tor Bay from the fort at Perry Head, Devon August 28'
- pencil, [?] Fordon near Honiton July 47', small house but gardens are well drawn, detailed trees
- pencil, 'an old Summer House Topsham,' looking from inside a [?]courtyard, building somewhat overgrown or with creepers



Buckfastleigh, 1854



Bowhill, near Exeter, mid-nineteenth century

pencil, 'Grenofen, near Tavistock'

pencil, some wash, 'Bowhill near Exeter' showing partly-thatched building, highly-detailed

pencil, 'Kilworthy', some detail of the garden

pencil, some wash, 'Hillersden House, Cullompton', large house with trees noted on lawn – elms, oaks, fir trees, & others, and also second view of house

pencil, 'Netherton near Honiton', crudely drawn

pencil, '[?]ruins of Tor Abbey

pencil, 'the windows of the Folletts, Topsham'

pencil, some wash, 'Kingsteignton, Devon', village scene

pencil, some wash, 'Bi ... Ashburton ... 53', village scene

Volume eight:

pencil, some wash, 'Buckfastleigh', village scene, detailed buildings

pencil, 'Old Chapel, Newton Bushell,' village scene

pencil, 'Crediton, Devon', village scene

pencil, 'Stoke Fleming near Dartmouth', church exterior

pencil, 'Gateway, Cockington', exterior

pencil, some wash 'Dawlish', scene along river, three buildings drawn

pencil, 'Vicaridge House, Churchstanton West Honiton', some garden details

pencil, some wash, 'Honiton Clyst', house, little garden

pencil, some wash, 'Bowhill near Exeter'

pencil, 'Old parsonage Bradninch', large double-gabled house, little garden details

pencil, some wash, 'Loxbeare Barton, near Tiverton,' large house, some details of garden

pencil, 'Ilfracombe, Devon Oct 25 23', harbour scene

pencil with wash, large two-storied building with series of Dutch gables, small entry porch

small pencil sketch, view harbour, possibly Torquay

Note, Volume 5 is mostly by other artists, including P. Rogers. These include a view of Plymouth from Saltash, 'AS view of Oreston August 22 1806 P. Rogers' with several detailed ships, views of Plymouth, including St Nicholas Island, a view from Mt Edgcumbe of the docks and Devonport, and several views of Crabtree and places between it and Plymouth in 1812.

I would like to thank Mr David Smart for taking the photographs.

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1. Stoye, Ian, 'F.W.L. Stockdale – Begetter of the Stockdale Collection', *The Devon Historian*, April 1993, no. 46, 3-8.
2. Six drawings of garden interest have been printed in Todd Gray, *The Garden History of Devon: an illustrated guide to sources* (Exeter, 1995), 30, 57, 96, 175, 238.

WEST HILL, A HILL THAT BECAME A PARISH

Winifred Greenaway

Lord Coleridge wrote¹ in 1905 'Ottery St Mary, home of the Coleridge family, lies on the left bank of the river Otter in a broad and pastoral valley, bounded on either side by the East and the West Hill. The site is one favoured by nature.' The West Hill has given its name to a village, hidden in woodlands stretching from Long Copse up to the level greensand summit at 500 ft and West Hill has been a parish in its own right, separate from Ottery St Mary, since 1863.

Its history unfolds with the road as it climbs gently past the ruined farm cottages where tramps rested between Exeter and Honiton and where local people left them food. Over a small stream is Foxenhole Mill built in 1815 by the Eveleigh family, one of the few names listed for this area in the Manor Book of Ottery St Mary. Behind the mill, recently converted into homes, is the gravel pit listed as a quarry after the County Council became responsible for Devon roads. Now worked with Rockbeare on the farther side of the Hill, it supplies quartzite pebbles crushed and used for road-building because of their good polishing qualities and resistance to wear.² Nearby is Leather Mill which supplied the needs of the community a century ago, and a house 'The Breaches' (sic) used as the first school.

The advance road sign for West Hill at this point is level with a Devon bank concealing a deep ditch at the bottom of the thickly wooded slope to Belbury Castle. The road to Broad Oak marches its outer defences. A paper given to the Exeter Archaeological Society in 1861 states:³

This station which occupied the crown of a hill 1½ miles or so from Ottery St Mary (but c.150' below the summit of West Hill) was obliterated 70 years ago. Samuel White of Castle Farm told us when he was a boy, the hill was entirely open heath; that he and his father were employed in levelling the entrenchments of the Camp; that they raised the earth in the interior with what they got out of the encircling banks; that there was a great ditch all round outside and that the present road at the south and east sides occupies the bottom of the former ditch; that he does not recollect any coins or relics having been found; that the field now standing in its place is called Castle field. This is 230 paces long by 80 wide.

The field and farm are still so called and a few houses retain the name of the fort, as in Belbury View. Belbury was considered to 'derive from Bel or Belus, the Great Pagan Deity of old.' No excavation has taken place.⁴ It now belongs to the family of Sir Charles Cave of Sidbury Manor.

From this level the woodlands continue upwards, concealing a community of almost 2000 in 759 or so homes, most built recently. Until the church of St Michael the Archangel was built in 1846 half a mile up the hill, 'the area was a wide heath belonging to Sir John Kennaway of Escot, 1st Baronet of Hyderbad. He let a great portion in plots to the industrious peasantry on long leases at a low rent and by this means it was brought rapidly into a state of cultivation'.⁵ Prior to this only 'Several Houses and Parcels of Ground' were known and in 1658 'an Herb Garden'.⁶

In the Lambeth Palace Library is a letter from Sir J.T. Coleridge, Judge of the Queen's Bench and nephew of the poet, written on circuit between Hertford and

Chelmsford in July 1845. Its five blue hurried pages urge the Secretary for the Incorporated Church Building Society to allow a church on West Hill.⁷ 'An active and thriving dissenter of great influence has erected a sort of barn in the district for which we wish to build – and he preaches and teaches there stoutly – he has also a large tract of ground in it to bring into cultivation – and the labour of the farms, Chapel and School all co-operate together. Our Vicar (of Ottery St Mary) has allotted the district to a zealous young man, who has got a very nice school – but you may conceive at what odds we are, if we have no church to take parents or children to.' Plans for a church were passed four weeks later. The foundation stone was laid by Sir John Coleridge in October 1845 and the Church of St Michael the Archangel consecrated in September of the following year in the presence of over two dozen church dignitaries and fifty gentry. A new order of things had begun.

Although one of the 'Six Hundred New Churches' built in this period to meet the changes following the Napoleonic Wars and moves of population, St Michael's was able to exceed the guidelines laid down by the Church Building Society. Certainly the site was not 'near nuisances such as steam engines or offensive manufactories' and the influence of the Kennaway and Coleridge families ensured wide support. The architect was John Buchanan Wollaston, student of Pugin and nephew of Sir J.T. Coleridge. He gave the credence table and other members of the family the altar, font, pulpit, the 1592 communion plate, the windows. Miss Althea Coleridge supplied the bible, its binding a fourteenth century copy. John Keeble sent a contribution. Was Thackerary, his step-father, a tenant of Sir John Kennaway, thinking of it when he wrote in *Pendennis* – 'At Tinkleton Church gate, as the bell was tolling in the sunshine, the white smocks and scarlet cloaks came trooping to Sunday worship'? He could not have guessed how prophetic was his continued narrative of conversation: "You'll let the house, of course. Good school in the neighbourhood; cheap country; devilish nice place for East India Colonels, or families wanting to retire. I'll speak about it at the club; there are lots of fellow want a home of that sort."⁸

By 1901 the population had risen to 317. 'Electrician' and 'signalman' had appeared in the parish registers. The vicarage, now East and West Grange, had been built ten years after the church. With the coming of the railway, the price of property in Sidmouth had risen and West Hill was 'discovered'. Generous houses such as Bendarroch (now a private school), The Warren, Wurlie (now Elsdon), Moorlands, Metcombe and Houndbeare House were built. Fine trees planted then survive and punctuate the landscape of the hill, but their gardens are now full of smaller homes in streets and closes bearing the names of those homes which didn't survive the changes cause by the two world wars. The coming of piped water made possible the surge of development since then.

The first post office was opened at the end of Toadpit Lane and kept by the wife of Harry Potter whose descendants created Potter's Country Market on the site of the original smithy, and who have done so much to influence the evolution of West Hill. The British Legion Club and the new school flourish – but there is still no pub.

Many agree with the poem the blacksmith wrote:

Have you ever been to West Hill in the spring-clad month of May
And viewed its charms from 'Prickly Pear' in early sunlight's ray?
Its residential dignity, and its hues of glorious green
'Twill make you say of Devonshire – It's the best place I've seen.

(From Poems by Harry Potter, Blacksmith, Postmaster and Sexton, 1947)

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6. *Woolmer's Exeter and Plymouth Gazette* 3 October 1846
7. Whetham, Catherine and Margaret her daughter, eds. *A Manor Book of Ottery St Mary* 1913
8. Letter from Sir J.T. Coleridge to Mr Bowdler, secretary of the Incorporated Church Building Society, Lambeth Palace Library.

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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)

Lapford: the 2000 year story of a mid-Devon village, by Noel Parry. Lapford: The Author, 1995, 88p, illustrations, maps. Obtainable from the author, Larkrise, Easington Road, Lapford, Crediton EX17 6QE. £3.00.

It is not often that an author can write himself into his own historical work, but this is what Mr Parry has been able to do. He has done it unostentatiously as one of the former headmasters of the village school whose history forms part of the village story. The author claims that 'this is not a deeply researched, scholarly work, rather a drawing together of readily available information, and it is intended principally for local people'. Any profits will go to local organisations. He more than fulfills his modest claim and, although the maps are hand-drawn and some of the illustrations rather pallid, there is much interesting detail in the 88 pages of the text. A mark of the schoolmaster seeking to produce empathy in history lessons is provided by his attempts to conjure up scenes from the remote past while at the other end of the timescale many inhabitants of Lapford will see familiar faces in some of the illustrations.

Despite the two millenia promised by the title, about half of the book covers the last two centuries and it is here that it is in many ways most valuable, preserving many personal memories of the village. Each community has its own special characteristics and Lapford provides us *inter alia* with a wicked vicar, Parson Jack Radford, and a large local factory which for many years was the major employer in the village, the Ambrosia factory which closed in 1974. Mr Parry chronicles all this, with other sections on nonconformity, roads and railways, the 1939-45 war and many other topics. In some cases the detail extracted from sources such as school logbooks might have been better presented in a tabular form, in the same way as he has provided lists of head teachers, congregational ministers and rectors, but perhaps this would have made it a less approachable book for the general readership that he is writing for.

A quibble which other compilers of village histories should note: there are two blank leaves at the end of the book. These could usefully have been filled by a listing of the most important of the many sources which the author has clearly consulted in preparing this history and an indication of where they can be seen. Another point for those writing for the future. Don't forget to explain the present as well as the past. What will people in the future make of the caption 'Red Nose Day at School, 1989'. Will they assume it to be an age-old local custom on a par with the Ottery Tar Barrel celebration?

Ian Maxted

Discovering Exeter 7/Lost Churches, by David Francis. Exeter Civic Society, 1995, 60pp, illustrated, £3.00. ISBN 0 9505873 5 4.

Earlier volumes in this series have taken their readers on a historical tour around individual Exeter parishes or defined areas like Pennsylvania. In this one the journey

is within or close to the city walls but the search is for the sites of buildings of which seldom any fragments remain. Wisely, the author has included visits to existing churches, some either co-eval with those destroyed or sheltering monuments from them.

The destruction of city churches in modern times has fallen into four phases: the mid-nineteenth century and later street 'improvements', the limited ecclesiastical closure policy between the wars, the 'blitz' and finally the post-1945 clearances and redundancies. In general the preservation of Exeter's churches has owed more to their congregations than to the civic or ecclesiastical authorities. A writer in the *Transactions of the Exeter Diocesan Architectural Society* in 1899 argued strongly that surplus churches could be put to other uses. 'We hold them in trust only, and have no right to destroy them'. A few years later Allhallows, Goldsmith Street, became another victim in circumstances, as the author relates, particularly sad for the rector and his congregation. Many of these churches had dwindling numbers of parishioners as people moved out into the suburbs but there was a lot of enthusiasm to keep them going. St Lawrence's where my father was rector's warden for many years and where I was baptised was one which in this way survived the assaults of the thirties to be destroyed in the blitz. It was a pity that its tower at least, if not the High Street front, could not have been preserved and incorporated in some new if non-religious building as was done in many German cities. Exeter High Street had always been an attractive jumble of styles.

Another childhood recollection is of St Paul's. All round it had been a slum area from which my father had recruited boys for one of the first Scout troops in Exeter. Many of them had died in the war and he liked to go to their church on the Sunday nearest Armistice Day. My memory is of a galleried building, classical in style and very neat. It was pulled down with the unsanitary homes which it had served. My impressions of the other churches which have disappeared since 1941 are less marked.

In observing that a substantial part of the information which he has used came from the writings of Beatrix Cresswell and Frances Rose-Troup the author wonders if these two ladies were collaborators or rivals. This question may assume that they were the only players in this particular field which they were not. For example, a third lady writer on Exeter and Devon churches was Ethel Lega-Weekes who indeed contributed to the work by Mrs Rose-Trupp cited in the bibliography. Then there were the men, many more of them, not all of whom were diffident advocates of their own views! No doubt Miss Cresswell and Mrs Rose-Troup disagreed from time to time but such evidence as is now available does not suggest enmity or rivalry between them.

This guide maintains the high standard of its predecessors. Its clear map and carefully planned routes should help the explorer to make the most use of his time with the least use of his legs.

Adrian Reed

Barbary Pirates off the Devon Coast, by Sadru Bhanji, 1996, 70pp, 10 illustrations. Orchard Publications, Chudleigh, £4.94. ISBN 1 898964 22 X

This book covers a wider field than its title suggests as it includes a general history of the rise and decline of the north African corsair states, themselves nominally part of the Ottoman Empire. Their significance for Devon began to be felt with the end of the

Spanish War in 1604 when many former English privateersmen turned to the closely allied trade of piracy. Dutch, Flemings and French joined in. Some including Devonians, worked out of the ports of the north African pirate states. Others, either voluntarily or after capture, became nominal converts to Islam. It was the technical skills of these 'renegades' that enabled the 'Turks' to build and to operate the ocean going ships that now appeared outside the Mediterranean and caused so much damage to shipping off the Westcountry and Irish coasts. It is with the exploits of these raiders that this book is largely concerned.

The Barbary corsairs differed from their competitors in piracy in that they were as much interested in the people on board the ships they took as in the goods the vessels carried. Men, women and children could be held to ransom or sold as slaves in the local markets, priced according to their skills or other attractions. This led to the seizure of Westcountry fishing boats and other small craft of little material value as well as to occasional raids ashore, such as that at Mount's Bay in 1636. If from the time of the Commonwealth onwards effective naval forces kept the Devon and Cornish coasts virtually pirate free its citizens were still being captured in the Mediterranean and the approaches to the Straits but in steadily decreasing numbers. Their fate was remembered in the supplication in the Litany for divine 'pity upon all prisoners and captives'. The practical measures for their redemption and the petitions to various authorities for help for individual Devonians are well covered by the author. Payment of ransom money could be made by an intermediary, perhaps a merchant, through the British Consuls or, on occasion, by the commander of a naval force. By the end of the seventeenth century British, Dutch and French sea power, considerations of legitimate trade, and outright bribery more or less removed the threat to citizens of those countries. The regrettable survival of the corsair states, though with reduced naval strength, throughout the following century, was due largely to the political, strategic and commercial interests of the Sea Powers.

The main account of life as a captive by a Devonian is that of Joseph Pitts who experienced both its hardships and consolations. His narrative shows that slaves were treated as being of value, either as labour or as earners of ransom money. Unless as punishment for serious offences it was not in the owner's interest to damage his own property, although beatings were not infrequent. It is perhaps a pity, then, that most of the illustrations in this book are rather lurid sketches based on the illustrations showing the various punishments of slaves in Father Dan's contemporary *Histoire de Barbarie*. They should not be allowed to distract attention from the text which admirably summarises a worrying and not always creditable chapter in Devon's history. I would plead, though, that if an expanded edition follows space should be found for the escape story of William Adams and his friends, admitted to Prince's Worthies although of 'mean and obscure parentage' because of the greatness of their exploit.

Adrian Reed

The Forgotten Battle, by John Wardman, Fire and Steel Ltd, Torrington, 1996. xv + 203 pp. £15.00, obtainable post free from the Mole and Haggis Bookshop, Torrington, EX38 8HN. ISBN 0 95267266 0 X

The hindsight of 350 years highlights the battle fought at Torrington on 16 February 1646 as the effective beginning of the end of the first Civil War in the South West, if

not across the whole country. After a desultory campaign during the bitter winter of 1645-46 the New Model Army under General Thomas Fairfax, with Cromwell, Lambert and Ireton among his officers, on their way to becoming the Grandees of the late 1640s, took on Ralph Lord Hopton and his Cornish levies, newly arrived in the royalist-inclined market town (10 February). Sharp and fierce, the two-hour engagement culminated when the royalist magazine, cavalierly lodged in the church, blew up. Almost certainly a deliberate act of desperation, the explosion found 200 or more victims. Fairfax himself only narrowly escaped death from a flying lump of lead. John Wardman's detailed commemorative account blames him for tardiness in seeking to take over and to neutralise the magazine. That seems a little harsh. But certainly the explosion was a shock which caused confusion enough to allow a sizeable number of royalists to get away, not all of them in blind panic. Generally Mr Wardman's judgements are balanced and acceptable, based as they are on Sealed Knot enactment experience and copious documentation. The Parliamentarians saw their hard-won victory as 'an admirable mercy' and in the succeeding months set about exploiting it. One by one the king's garrisons across Devon and Cornwall gave up the struggle. Charles I, down, but not yet feeling out, soon slipped away from his Oxford HQ to inflict himself upon the Scots army at Newcastle, determined from there to continue his unchanging policies, now by other means than war. The upshot was 30 January 1649 at Whitehall. *The Forgotten Battle*, coupled with the re-enactment in August 1996, when the weather may well be worse than it was in February 1646, will ensure for the future the inaccuracy of its own title. Well informed and organised and enhanced by a wealth of illustrations by Philip Dixon, another Sealed Knotter, it is an excellent example of local publishing initiatives, deserving of a wider circulation.

Ivan Roots

From Destruction to Deliverance, by Mark Stoyle. 'Exeter Studies in History'. University of Exeter Press, 1996. xv + 232 pp., £11.95 paperback. ISBN 0 85989 478 9.

Oddly enough the significance of the result at Torrington is not mentioned in *From Destruction to Deliverance*, which contemplates men and movements in Exeter from the 1620s to the surrender of the royalist garrison there in April 1646. The book, which includes a selection of documents aptly chosen to reinforce the thrust of the text, while stressing some peculiar, even unique features of 'the centre, heart and head of the West', is also offered as a sort of case-study of an urban centre during what became – some might think, inexorably – a time of crisis. Presenting Exeter in its physical, administrative, economic, social and religious manifestations, Dr Stoyle finds it by no means 'a united community'. Rather he sees a complex – embracing *inter alia* traders and clerics – in which any 'ideological consensus' there might ever have been among its leading citizens was breaking up throughout the 1620s and 30s. The influence of men, 'puritans', like Ignatius Jurdain – thought *he* was egregious even among them, almost *sui generis* – zealous to further God's glory through teaching and preaching rather than cathedral rites and formal prayer, brought strains across the city, intensified by the existence of so many small parishes within the boundaries. Responding to the drift towards war during 1642 a majority of the lay elite worked to put Exeter at the disposal of Parliament, brushing aside royalist sentiment, of which

there was certainly some. On the event, the success throughout the South West of the king's forces brought the city, 'proud' and 'rebellious' as it was in face of two sieges, into 'the power of his sacred Majesty' in September 1643.

During the royalist occupation parliamentary inclinations were necessarily muted. Drawing on archaeological as well as record material, Dr Stoyle offers a vivid portrayal of what happened between 1643 and 1646. The third siege – by the New Model – increased the hardship and disruption of war, adding to it much physical destruction. War-weariness and disillusion only began to be lifted when the stubborn garrison marched out, on honourable terms, drums beating, colours flying, match alight in their hands, still ready to fight, but really on their way to nowhere. Within a few days Exeter shops were opening up. Life, as it must, went on. All this is a story well worth the telling and told well with advantages by a historian who has grasped the possibilities that come from putting a local alongside a regional and a national dimension. Though presumably, like Mr Wardman's book *The Forgotten Battle*, in some measure prompted by the continuing spate of 350th anniversaries, *From Destruction to Deliverance* will surely have a long shelf life.

Ivan Roots

Coppers' Devon: two centuries of crime and strange events from the comical to bizarre by Grahame Holloway. Peninsula Press, 1995. 144p, illustrations. £6.99. ISBN 1 872640 36 2

The task of reviewing this little volume is of special interest to me because Graham Holloway, in his acknowledgement, thanks 'the late Walter Hutchings' whose history of the Devon Constabulary called *Out of the Blue* provided much of the historical background for him. As a young librarian I met Walter Hutchings when he had just been given the task by the Chief Constable of writing a centenary history of the Force. The Devon Constabulary was created under the County Constabulary Act in 1856 and its first Chief Constable appointed soon afterwards. It was my first experience of helping with serious research and his first adventure into writing. I still remember those first tentative steps we took together.

This light and very readable story of the police would have been given greater purpose if the more recent crimes had been given fuller coverage. It is now over forty years since Superintendent Hutchings' work was published and this is, as far as I am aware, the only history of the police in Devon. Graham Holloway in his Introduction says that his book is 'neither a tourist guide nor history book', however, the value of *Coppers' Devon* would have been enhanced if he had noted his bibliographical sources and included even a brief index.

The author has used his service in the Police, his account starting in east Devon where 'on leaving school in 1949, I joined Devon Constabulary as a Police Cadet'. He subsequently served in the four corners of the county and his stories come from an equally wide area, from the 'pillaging Gubbins' of Lydford to the Genette Tate mystery of Aylesbeare.

John Pike

Dartmoor Granite. Colour Video. Written and narrated by Helen Harris. 1996. £11.00p Available from G Spink, 10 Cardinal Avenue, St Budeaux, Plymouth PL5 1UW.

The 1990s has seen the advent of a number of video films about matters Devonian, available through bookstores and shops. Whilst many of these videos are best viewed as holiday souvenirs, others, such as *Dartmoor Granite*, set out to give an informed picture of a particular historical topic, capitalising on the advantages film can have over the printed word.

Dartmoor means granite and it is fitting that Helen Harris, the author of *The Industrial Archaeology of Dartmoor*, has chosen this rock for her first foray into the video format. Working with the production team of Peter Roberts of the Plymouth Mineral and Mining Club and local film maker Graeme Spink, she sets out to chart the 290 million story of the Dartmoor rock in just 37 minutes. The video opens with a clear explanation of the geological processes by which granite was formed before tracing its use through more than forty centuries from prehistoric stone rows and hut circles to medieval longhouses and then on to the Victorian London Bridge and the 1980s memorial to the Falklands Conflict.

As well as grand buildings such as Nelson's Column, Plymouth Breakwater and County Hall in Exeter, Dartmoor granite also found its way into the streets and pavements of Tavistock and many another town as kerbstones and setts. The identification of the individual quarries – such as Haytor, Foggintor, Staple Tor and Pew Tor – from which the different types of granite came is one of the many details highlighted by the video.

But perhaps *Dartmoor Granite* really comes into its own with archive film of a train stopping at Ingra Tor Halt, a quarrying community on the Princetown line, and the modern footage of men at work in Merrivale Quarry, which still operates today. The video allows us to watch over the shoulder of Peter Holland as he uses all his skill to split a massive granite block by the traditional feather and tare method (how often have we read about this technique? Here we can actually watch it happen). And Helen Harris' interview with Gerald Metters, a Merrivale stonemason who worked on the Falklands Memorial (twice in fact – the ship carrying the first memorial to the Islands sank so a second version now marks the site), shows the value of oral history even for the recent past. When Mr Metters first came to Merrivale Quarry it employed fifty stonemasons; 'nowadays', he reflects, 'you can't really afford to employ a stonemason anymore.'

Perhaps for those who know Dartmoor, its granite tors can become almost too familiar. This video helps us to refocus our gaze not just on the tors but also on the centuries of toil and craftsmanship that have made up the granite industry. *Dartmoor Granite* is a brave venture by its creators and deserves to sell well not just in Devon but even as far afield as Arizona, where the old London Bridge has been re-erected to show the splendour and endurance of Dartmoor granite to the New World – thanks to some slight redesign by the master craftsmen of Merrivale, as Gerald Metters explains in this video.

Simon Timms

The Great Storm at Widecombe, 21 October 1638. Transcript of original 1638 pamphlet, prepared and published by Mike Brown, Dartmoor Press, 24 Lipson Court, Greenbank Road, Plymouth PL4 7JG. 16pp + card cover A5. Price £1.50 + 25p P&P.

This interesting booklet recalled the violent electrical storm which struck the village of Widecombe-in-the-Moor in 1638, in which the parish church of St Pancras bore the brunt, with one of the tower pinnacles crashing through the nave roof, killing people in the congregation and causing much damage. Very shortly afterwards a small pamphlet describing the event was printed, and it is this second issue that is here reproduced. Text of the original has been given verbatim, and original spelling and grammar retained. Many legends have arisen in the years since the occurrence, and modern accounts written, but this is undoubtedly the most authentic version.

This is the latest in a series of research studies made available by Mike Brown, who spends many hours in record offices. Dealing mainly with parishes in the south and south-west areas of Dartmoor they include transcripts of churchwarden's accounts, manor court rolls, registers and other documents. A list of titles available, all of which are reasonably priced and of potential usefulness to local historians, is available on application to the address given.

Helen Harris

Yelverton & District Local History Society Newsletter No. 13 (1996). 32pp A5 & card cover. £1 to members. £1.50 to non-members. Obtainable, +30p for p&p, from Paul Rendell, 20 Rolston Close, Southway, Plymouth PL6 6PE.

Yelverton LHS is to be congratulated on its attractively produced **Newsletter**, well printed, and containing useful information, reviews, and interesting articles relating to the society's constituent parishes.

Compiler of the Newsletter is now the society's chairman/secretary and honorary editor, Paul Rendell, who also contributes a piece on Merrivale Quarry's history. (It would be interesting to know where the granite setts made at the quarry around 1876 were used, as he states, in the floor of Tavistock Market, which was built in 1862 using floor pavestones from Pew Tor). If advice may be offered it is that Mr Rendell might set the tone for his publication by presenting a less sketchy list of his sources, which would raise the Newsletter's standing. Further articles of absorbing interest include ones on Grenofen Manor by Peter Laxton; the Creber family by Elisabeth C. Edwards; Abraham Giles of Walkhampton – well documented by Mike Brown; and on the longhouse Higher Dittisham, Walkhampton, illustrated by attractive drawings, by Jenny Sanders.

Helen Harris

THE PLYMOUTH ATHENAEUM. Although the recently received 137 page Volume VII of the Proceedings of the Plymouth Athenaeum relates to a period, 1987/1992, now rather in the past, its contents give an indication of the lively activities of the establishment. Listed in the publication are dates, for each year, of the meetings held at the Athenaeum – a wide range including those of different groups and societies as well as lectures. Sometimes the events amount to over twenty a month. (The list could possibly be a useful resource for other societies' programme secretaries when searching for speakers). Also included are the texts of lectures given in those years, including one, on Drake and Plymouth, by a former President of our own society, Crispin Gill. The Athenaeum, founded in 1812, was of course, the venue of the DHS's spring 1995 meeting and must be a valuable asset for interested people living in Plymouth.

NEWS FROM LOCAL SOCIETIES

Lifton Local History Group is now well established and moves from strength to strength. Meeting on first Wednesday evenings, remaining 1996 talks include the history of Dartmoor Prison by Ron Jay on 2 October and of the Ambrosia Factory by Rex Davey on 6 November. Contact Mrs Marion Kneebone, 01566 784238.

Old Plymouth Society, also now thriving, with monthly meetings on a Friday evening at the Athenaeum, has a stimulating programme extending into 1997 and has now issued its fourth newsletter and third booklet – on Tracing Plymouth's History through Memorials, Tablets and Plaques, by Ray Bush. Contact OPS Secretary, Mrs Doreen Mole, 01752 774316.

The Lymptone Society's honorary secretary, Rosemary Smith, reports that the society's military historian, Ian Angus, has now finished recording all the inscriptions (military and otherwise) on the gravestones in Lymptone churchyard. In December 1995 the Lymptone Society published a new short guide and history of the village, with parish map and footpaths, entitled *The Lymptone Story*. By June this year this had sold well over 700 copies.

Items from local societies are welcomed for inclusion in *The Devon Historian*. Please send in good time to the Editor.

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