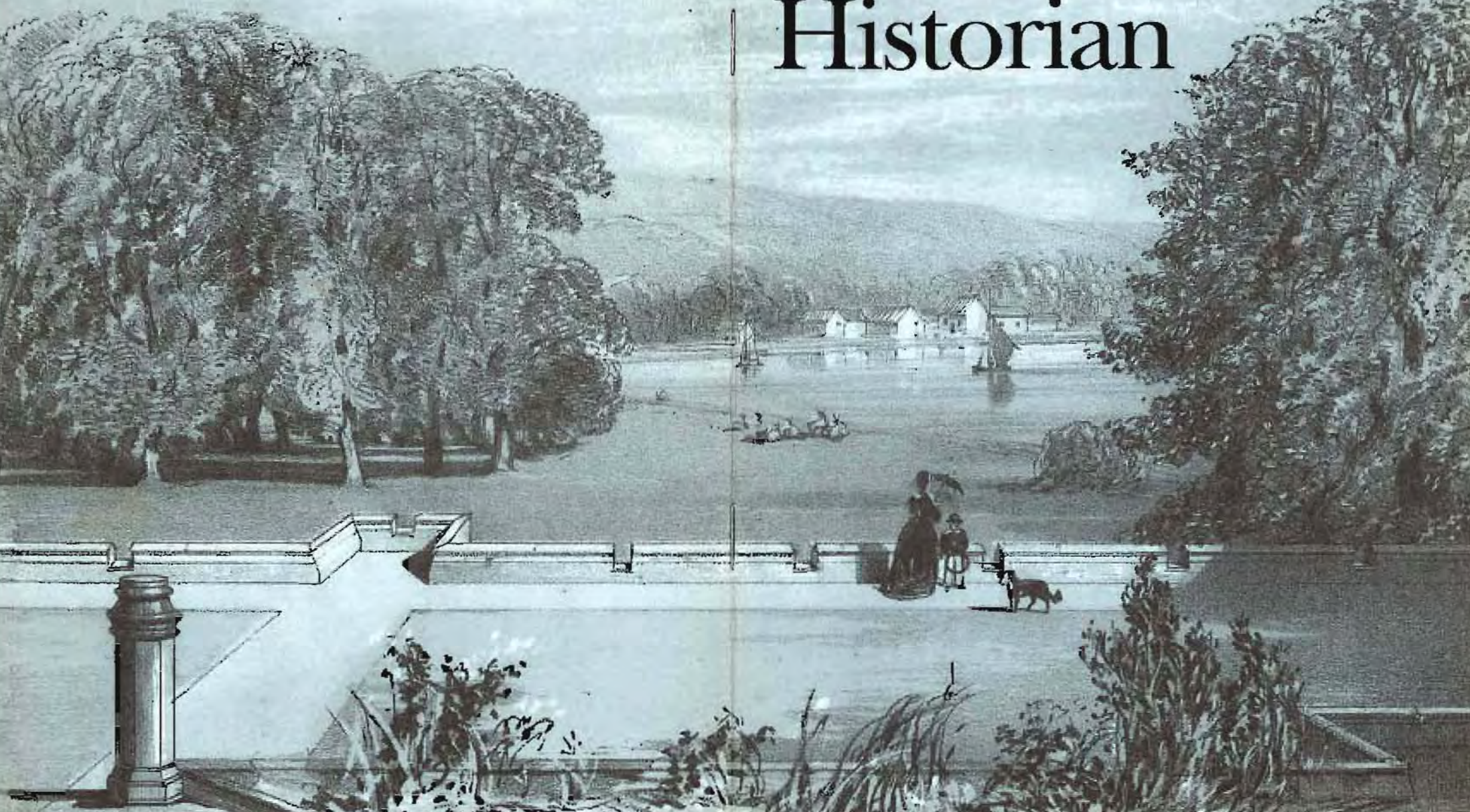


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Correspondence relating to *The Devon Historian* and contributions for publication should be sent to Mrs Helen Harris, Hon. Editor, *The Devon Historian*, Hironnelles, 22 Churchill Road, Whitchurch, Tavistock PL19 9BU. The deadline for the next issue is 1 July 1997. 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.

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The Society will meet at Woodbury on 5 April, and on 12 July, jointly with the Cornish Association of Local Historians, at Millbrook and Mount Edgcumbe. The AGM will be at Exeter at 11 October.

Lympstone, from the Terrace [of Powderham Castle], lithograph by W.R. Dickinson after Lady Elizabeth Courtenay, London 1845. (Somers Cocks no. 1482)

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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.

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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.: 1 July 1997, etc.

BEFORE THE COAST GUARD

Robert Perkins

The Coast Guard was formed in 1822. But the development of a preventive waterguard began in the seventeenth century. There was a Custom House smack at Plymouth by 1683 and revenue sloops at Dartmouth and Ilfracombe in 1698, when the need for 'a stricter guard of the western coast during the high duties' was met by establishing more customs officers, including preventive and boat men, between 'Teignmouth and Plymouth'. There were similar periods of strengthened establishment during the eighteenth century. But preventive boats remained a responsibility of officials of the Customs ports.

The Preventive Waterguard

The higher duties imposed during and after the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars caused an alarming increase in smuggling. Several descriptions of force were then engaged in action against the smugglers. In March 1808 the Treasury ordered 'a special survey of the officers of the customs employed and stationed on land and water for the prevention of smuggling'. In August 1809 proposals for 'great alterations in the waterguard of cruizers and preventive boats' were approved. The coast was to be divided into three districts each inspected and controlled by the commander of a cruiser. The south Devon coast came under Captain Blake of the *Tiger*, based at Cowes, with the tenders *Vulture* and *Wolf*; *Rose* and *Greyhound* were to cruise between the Isle of Wight and the Start and *Swallow* and *Hind* from Berry Head to Land's End. North Devon came under Captain Hopkins of the *Speedwell* at Milford, with the tenders *Batt* and *Fox*; the *Dolphin* and *Shark* were to cruise from Land's End to the Bristol Channel.

The instruction to district commanders to 'institute one general effective and incessant superintendence and control on float over the whole of the service' was new. But many of the preventive boat stations already existed or had been used in the past. The south Devon coast was to be covered by a proposed station at Bigbury Bay and the existing preventive boats at Bridport, Beer, Torcross and Cawsand Bay. Boats were proposed for Clovelly, to guard the coast from Bude to Barnstaple, and at Porlock Point for Morte Point to Watchet.

The Preventive Waterguard became effective on 5 July 1810, but Captain Blake had already inspected the coast of south Devon in March, in the revenue cruiser *Swallow*, with the Plymouth tender *Wolf*, Captain David Williams. At some ports and creeks preventive duty by Custom House boats was to continue. In March 1810 the Commissioners asked the Collector at Dartmouth if the four-oared boat and four men were sufficient at that port. He replied that 'the boats and boatmen here are not altogether employed on Harbour Duty, but also go to sea on the lookout for Smugglers, particularly if any are expected on the coast. They also act as watchmen, two of whom are alternately each night at the watch-house'. At Brixham Captain Blake noted that the boat of the Customs sifter and tide waiter was 'so bad as not to trust themselves in'. The need to build a six-oared boat for Brixham was under consideration until November 1811 when the Commissioners ordered four-oared boats for service at Brixham and Torquay. Within the port of Plymouth, customs officers stationed around the estuaries of the Tamar and Plym included a four-oared boat's crew at Oreston.

There were several years of difficulty in manning, and in building watch and boat

houses. But by December 1813 Captain Blake had stations at Beer, Dawlish, Torcross and Hope Cove and reported that 'the preventive boats and riding officers are fully equipped and on their station'. A seventh boatman was provided at each after July 1815. It appears that by then another boat was stationed in Bigbury Bay; later both Burgh Island and Mothecombe came into consideration¹².

Naval control of the revenue cruisers.

In March 1816 Parliament voted to retain the war duty on imports for five years. The Treasury was alarmed by the enormous increase and more daring character of the smugglers let loose by the termination of the war and the opportunities provided by the opening up of the French coast. The revenue cruisers were transferred to the Admiralty in the belief that 'it would add greatly to the efficacy of their exertions if they were put under naval watchfulness and discipline'. The services of a number of cruisers were to be dispensed with and their commanders appointed on half pay as inspectors of districts in a new Preventive Boat Service with more boats¹³.

But many experienced captains of revenue vessels chose to leave the service rather than come under naval control or accept appointments ashore. One notable loss was of Captain Alexander Frazer, who was in command of the *Busy* in Plymouth Sound and Cawsand Bay from December 1787 until taking over the old *Ranger* from Captain Nathaniel Lane in July 1799¹⁴. On the evening of Saturday 24 April 1802 a new *Ranger* of 160 tons and 14 guns was launched from Parkins' dock-yard at Frank's Quarry, Cremyll; it was reported that 'after the launch Captain Frazer gave a cold collation to a number of ladies and gentlemen assembled on the joyful occasion'¹⁵. In June *Ranger* sailed for Deptford to be coppered and receive her guns. By September she was cruising against the smugglers on what was described as her 'lucky station', from the Start to the Dodman and Lizard Point¹⁶. Captains Frazer, Blake and Hopkins undertook the special survey of the Waterguard in 1808-9¹⁷. During 1810, Captain Frazer's inspecting cruiser became the *Lapwing*, 124 tons, a fast sailer built at Mevagissey in 1808. Early in 1813 he was appointed inspecting commander of a new district which included much of the south coasts of Devon and Cornwall, though revenue vessels cruising from Weymouth as far as the Start remained for a while under Captain Blake. By 1816 Captain Blake had shifted from Cowes to Dover; the Plymouth district then extended from Southampton to Scilly and the Channel Islands. Yet there was no place for Captain Frazer after 1816. Sir John Duckworth, the Port Admiral at Plymouth, reported that 'he represents himself as degraded by the present arrangement from the rank and station he has enjoyed' and was allowed to retire on full pay¹⁸.

Revenue vessels stationed between Land's End and Whitehaven, and formerly under the inspecting commander at Milford, were attached to the Plymouth station after 5 April 1816. But vessels whose ports of rendezvous were east of the meridian of the Start were now under the command of Sir Edward Thornbrough at Portsmouth. The quarterly returns of seizures for the Plymouth station suggest that the navy proved as effective as the revenue vessels, by intercepting vessels at sea; but they did not adapt to the nature of duties on the coast or co-ordinate their actions with the preventive boats. Admiral Duckworth noted the problems of mixed crews and observed that 'in revenue vessels the duties depended in a peculiar manner on the habits of the men'¹⁹. Naval control of the revenue vessels was soon seen to be inappropriate.

The Preventive Boat Service.

In January 1816 provision was made for an increase of twenty-three six-oared and

thirty four-oared boats and 194 men, of which forty-eight were needed to bring the existing establishment up to eight men for each boat²⁰. In February, Captain J.M. Hanchett was appointed Comptroller-General of the new Preventive Boat Service and commenced a thorough reorganisation²¹. The stations were to be increased in number and formed into smaller districts, each under a resident inspecting commander. In February 1816 the Customs were allowed to rebuild the watch house at Exmouth on secure ground using the materials of the old house²², but in December 1816 the Treasury decided that their proposals for a 'lookout house' near Torquay was a matter for Captain Hanchett²³.

Captain Hanchett first inspected the coast in the summer of 1816. In August the Customs complained that he had not only inspected the preventive boats but also those engaged in harbour duties under the laws of revenue and navigation: his suggestions as to these boats were inapplicable and would not be carried out²⁴. In November 1816 his 'suggested measures for the more effective prevention of smuggling and rendering the preventive boat service efficient' were approved²⁵. In September 1816 it was realised that it would not be advisable to make a general change of crews from one station to another until the ensuing spring²⁶. The priority was to combat the increase of smuggling in Cornwall, Norfolk and the Isle of Wight. But in December 1816 the increase in Bigbury Bay required an additional preventive boat to be stationed there immediately. At Bideford Captain Hanchett thought that the hire of the pilot boat on occasion might do²⁷. On 27 December 1816 he advised the Admiralty of his proposals to station additional preventive boats at 'Burrough' Island, Brixham, Budleigh Salterton and Lyme Cobb or Pier²⁸. Premises were generally difficult to find. A supply of condemned vessels for use as watch houses was requested²⁹. A barrack building at Plymouth required extensive repairs. In May 1817 it was proposed to use part of the former hospital attached to the barracks at Berry Head for the Brixham preventive boat's crew and in January 1818 premises were being sought for a watch house³⁰.

Each station was to be equipped with a six-oared galley and a four-oared gig, built to the pattern of boats in service from the boat builders of Deal; Hanchett proposed that nine of the total requirement of twenty-one of each of these classes of boat should be built in Plymouth Yard³¹. In January 1817 he asked for an admiralty cutter to take the nine completed six-oared galleys from Plymouth to the different stations where they were required (18). Admiral Duckworth consulted the Admiralty as to the propriety of delivering them to stations within the area of Admiral Thornbrough's command, including Brixham, Budleigh Salterton and Lyme³².

Progress with the districts relied on the willingness of former commanders of revenue cruisers paid off in late 1816 and early 1817 to accept posts as inspecting commanders ashore. Some appear to have taken umbrage. The prospect of inspecting a lengthy coastline on half pay, an allowance of £60 a year for a horse, and the promise of a share of seizures, was no inducement. On 2 January 1817 John Eales, late commander of the *Alarm* at Padstow, was appointed to No. 9 District, extending from St Alban's Head in Dorset to Rame Head in Cornwall. He was required to reside at Sidmouth. He had resigned by 24 February and was replaced by Captain George Hine who had been appointed inspecting commander of No. 12 District, from Trevose Head to Bristol, with a residence at Bideford, on 11 January 1817. Captain Hine did not take up either post³³.

By 24 May 1817, District No. 10 was to extend from St. Alban's Head to Langstone Rock, west of the Exe, under Mr. John Andrews at Bridport. The stations included Lyme Cobb, Beer and Budleigh Salterton. District No. 11 was to extend from

Langstone Rock to Portwrinkle with stations at Dawlish, Brixham, Torcross, Hope Cove, Mothecombe, Yealm and Cawsand. The inspecting commander, Lt. E. de Montmorency, was to reside at Kingsbridge²⁵. The revenue cruiser *Wolf* was paid off at Plymouth on 13 March 1817 and Captain David Williams became inspecting commander of District No. 14 at Padstow, extending from Land's End to Hartland Point. Mr Edward Morgan at Minehead was in command of District No. 15 from Hartland Point to Kingvood, Bristol; his only station in Devon was at Clovelly which guarded the coast 'from Hartland Point to Watermouth Cove, round Lundy Island and up the Barnstaple and Bideford rivers'. The erection of a watch and boat house at Clovelly was approved on 10 March 1817²⁶, but men were stationed there from January²⁷.

In November 1817 Captain Hanchett advised the Admiralty that he had found it expedient to make a new arrangement²⁸. The Bridport district remained unchanged but the guard was strengthened further west. The establishment of a preventive boat station with eight men at Salcombe was approved in September 1817²⁹. Lt. de Montmorency shifted to Brixham and Burgh Island became the western limit of his command. In January 1816 it was reported that one of the plans under consideration was to employ ships' boats to watch the various creeks and lakes in the vicinity of the naval ports³⁰. A force of this kind appears to have been established at Plymouth Dock under Captain C.S. White RN 'for Port Wrinkle and the adjacent rivers'. But a Plymouth district of the Preventive Boat Service was now established, to extend from Burgh Island to 'Candis Point' with stations at Mothecombe, Yealm, Cawsand, Portwrinkle and Polperro. Lt. George Brooks Foster RN was appointed inspecting officer on 30 October 1817³¹. The guard of the Yealm station extended up the Plym. Cawsand guarded the coast 'from the Rame to Drake's Island, up the Tamar, Saltash and other rivers and St. John's creek'.

Men were also stationed at one or two places not included in the lists of districts and stations prepared by the Comptroller-General's office. Bovisand Bay was manned by June 1817 and Prawle by May 1818. In the Padstow district the coast from Bude Haven to Hartland Point was guarded by men at Hartland Quay from March 1817; the station was not included in the lists until February 1819 and the establishment was withdrawn before 1822³².

During 1818 adjustments were made to the extent of guard of stations (see table). Early in 1819 the Deputy Comptroller-General, Lt. James Dombain, surveyed the coasts of Devon and Dorset³³. Babbacombe was included in the list of stations in February 1819³⁴. It was to guard the coast 'from Stokeinteign Head to Paignton'; previously Hopes Nose had marked the boundary between the Dawlish and Brixham stations. Substantial changes were made to the Bridport district. A district station was established at Sidmouth, extending westwards to the River Teign. Men were stationed there by March 1819 and an inspecting officer, Commander Thomas Gallwey RN, by August³⁵. In 1821 Commander Gallwey moved to Fowey. It was then decided that the inspecting commander would reside in future at Exmouth, now the port of rendezvous of the revenue cutter *Scourge*³⁶.

Several new stations were established in 1820. Torquay was manned by 1 November. A station was established at Dartmouth, where preventive duties by Custom House boats presumably ceased, and at Challaborough and Ilfracombe³⁷. No new stations appear to have been established in 1821. The recommendation of the Prince Regent's Independent committee of inquiry to return to the previous unified control of preventive boats and revenue vessels under the Board of Customs was approved on 15 January 1822. The new service was to be called the Coast Guard and its first

Comptroller-General, Captain William Rowles RN, was appointed in July 1822. Men had been stationed at Teignmouth in January 1822 and during the year a station was finally established at Exmouth³⁸. In 1823 the Coast Guard commenced an extensive building programme, mostly on sites serving the stations it had inherited from the Preventive Boat Service.

Extent of Guard of Preventive Boat Stations, 1817-1819.

24 May 1817:		5 November 1817:		6 February 1819:	
District & Station	Limits of Guard	District & Station	Limits of Guard	District & Station	Limits of Guard
Bridport (part):		Bridport (part):		Bridport (part):	
	Entrance to Bridport Harbour		Entrance to Bridport Harbour		Shorn Cliff (a)
Lyme Cobb		Lyme Cobb		Lyme Cobb	
	Seaton		Seaton		Axmouth
Beer		Beer		Beer	
	Otterton Point		Otterton Point		Salcombe Mouth
Budleigh Salterton		Budleigh Salterton		Budleigh Salterton	
	Langstone Rock		Langstone Rock		Entrance of River Exe
Kingsbridge:		Brixham:		Brixham:	
Dawlish		Dawlish		Dawlish	
	Hopes Nose		Hopes Nose		Stokeinteign-head
				Babbacombe	Paignton
Brixham		Brixham		Brixham	
	Stoke Fleming		Stoke Fleming		Stoke Fleming
Torcross		Torcross		Torcross	
	Prawle Point		Portsmouth		The Start
			Salcombe		Salcombe
			Bolt Tail		
				
Hope Cove		Hope Cove		Hope Cove	
	Bolt Head		Bolt Head		Bolt Head
	Thurlestone River		West side of Burgh Island		Thurlestone River

24 May 1817:		5 November 1817:		6 February 1819:	
District & Station	Limits of Guard	District & Station	Limits of Guard	District & Station	Limits of Guard
		Plymouth:		Plymouth:	
Mothecombe	Mewstone	Mothecombe	Mewstone	Mothecombe	Stoke Point
Yealm	Drake's Island	Yealm	Drake's Island	Yealm	Entrance of Cattewater
					Drake's Island
Cawsand	Portwrinkle	Cawsand	Rame Head	Cawsand	Rame Head
		Portwrinkle	Looe Island	Portwrinkle	Looe Island
		Polperro	Candis Point (b)	Polperro	Candis Point
Padstow (part):		Padstow (part):		Padstow (part):	
Boscastle	Tintagel Head	Tintagel Head	Boscastle	Bude Haven	Hartland Quay
	Hartland Point		Hartland Point		Hartland Point
Minehead (part):		Minehead (part):		Minehead (part):	
Clovelly	Watermouth Cove	Clovelly	Watermouth Cove	Clovelly	Watermouth Cove
Porlock Quay	Stert Island	Porlock Quay	Stert Island	Porlock Quay	Lilstock

Note (a) below Golden Cap, south-west of Chideock
(b) presumably Cannis Rock, east of Gribbin Head

Sources: Comptroller-General's lists in ADM 1/1954,1955

References:

(All Admiralty, Customs and Treasury documents are at the PRO)

- (1) *Calendar of Treasury Books*, Vols. VII (1681-5) p. 875 and XIV (1698-9) pp. 129-131.
- (2) ditto, Vol. XXXI (1717) pp. 614-5, and T 1/459 Treasury Papers, No. 67 of 21 February 1767, for example.
- (3) T 1/1091 Treasury Papers 1809 No. 8857, letter to Customs 29 March 1808
- (4) T 29/102 Treasury Minute 15 August 1809.
- (5) T 1/1091 Treasury Papers 1809, No. 8857, Enclosure No. 1.
- (6) ditto, Enclosure No. 6.
- (7) CUST 65/12 Outport Letter Book, Collector to Board, Dartmouth 1809-11.
- (8) CUST 65/13 ditto, 1811-13.
- (9) CUST 66/10 ditto, Plymouth 1809-10.
- (10) CUST 29/36 Minute Book, Western Ports, 1814-20.
- (11) T 28/40 Preventive Service 1816-20, Minute 2 February 1816: Parliamentary Papers, 1816 (64) XVIII 119-123, 'Treasury Minutes and Correspondence on Revenue Cutters'; T 29/144 Treasury Minute 15 November 1816.
- (12) Steel's 'Original and Correct List of the Royal Navy' October 1793, etc. *The Naval Chronicle*, Vol 1, January - June 1799, et seq.
- (13) *Exeter Flying Post*, 29 April 1802, as 'Mr. Perkins' dock-yard, Frank's Quay'.
- (14) *Naval Chronicle* 1802, Vols. VII, 529 and VIII, 345.
- (15) CUST 28/8 Board Minute of 5 October 1809.
- (16) CUST 30/38 Board Reports 1816 and ADM 1/838 Correspondence C-in-C Plymouth 1816 No. 85.
- (17) ADM 1/839 Correspondence C-in-C Plymouth 1817
- (18) T 28/40 Preventive Service 1816-20.
- (19) CUST 31/24 Secretary's Office Out Letters, January - March 1816.
- (20) T 29/144 Treasury Board Minutes, November - December 1816.
- (21) CUST 30/196 Board Out Letters, Extra Departmental, 1815-1816.
- (22) CUST 28/23, copy of letter Hanchett to Treasury of 2 September 1816.
- (23) ADM 1/1953 Captains' Letters H 1816 No. 287.
- (24) T 11/57 Out Letter Book, Customs & Excise 1816-17.
- (25) ADM 1/1954 Captains' Letters H 1817 No. 67.
- (26) ADM 175/1, 2, 4 Records of Service, Coast Guard, 1816-1827.
- (27) ADM 1/1954 Captains' Letters H 1817 No. 234.
- (28) *The Times*, 2 January 1816 3b, for example.
- (29) ADM 1/1955 Captains' Letters H 1818-19 No. 36.
- (30) CUST 64/79, Board's Orders, Exeter, 1821.

THE GUBBINGS: FACT, FICTION AND THE PARISH REGISTERS.

S. Bhanji

It is believed by many that a band of outlaws known as the Gubbings once lived on Dartmoor. An often repeated view is that which appeared in the 1856 edition of Murray's handbook of Devon and Cornwall: the Gubbings were a band of thieves who took advantage of the breakdown of law and order during the time of Charles I and lived in and around Lydford Gorge under the leadership of one Roger Rowle¹.

The earliest known references to the Gubbings both date from the seventeenth century. One is presented as a factual account; the other occurs in a work of the Tavistock-born poet William Browne. The latter, *Lydford Journey*, is variously described as a satirical sketch, a luxuriant fancy, and a sad reflection of what was once a major town (3).

Thomas Fuller's *History of the Worthies of England* was published in 1662. The following is taken from the section concerning Devonshire (4).

The Gubbings

So now I dare call them (secure^d by distance) which one of more valour durst not do to their Face, for fear their fury fall upon him. Yet hitherto have I met with none, who could render a reason of their Name. We call the *Shavings of Fish* (which are little worth) *Gubbings*; and sure it is they are sensible that the Word importeth *shame* and *disgrace*. As for the suggestion of my worthy and learned Friend, borrowed from *Buxtorfius*, that such who did *inhabitare montes gibberosos*, were called *Gubbings*, such will smile, at the *Ingenuity*, who dissent from the truth, of the *Etymology*.

I have read of an *England* beyond *Wales*; but the *Gubbings-Land* is a *Scythia* within *England*, and they pure Heathens therein. It lyeth nigh *Brent-Tor*, in the *edg* of *Dartmore*. It is reported, that some *two hundred* years since, *two Strumpets* being with child, fled hither to hide themselves, to whom certain lewd Fellows resorted, and this was their First Original. They are a Peculiar of their own making, exempt from *Bishop*, *Arch-Deacon*, and all Authority either *ecclesiastical* or *Civil*: They live in *Cotts* (rather *Holes* than *Houses*) like *Swine*, having all in common, *multiplied* without *Marriage* into many *Hundreds*: Their language is the *drosse* of the *dregs* of the *Vulgar Devonian*; and the more learned a man is, the worse he can understand them. During our *Civil Wars*, no *Souldiers* were *quartered* amongst them, for fear of being *quartered* amongst them. Their *Wealth* consisteth in *other mens goods*, and they live by stealing the *Sheep* on the *More*; and vain it is for any to search their *Houses*, being a *Work beneath* the pains of a *Sheriff*, and *above* the *Power* of any *Constable*. Such their *Fleetnesse*, they will outrun many *Horses*; *Vivaciousnesse*, they outlive *most men*; living in the *Ignorance* of *Luxury*, the *Extinguisher* of *Life*. They hold together like *Burrs*; offend *One*, and *All* will revenge his *Quarrel*.

But now I am informed, that they begin to be civilized, and tender their Children to *Baptisme*; and return to be men, yea Christians again: I hope no *Civil people* amongst us will turn *Barbarians*, now these *Barbarians* begin to be civilized.

In its fullest known version, *Lydford Journey* consists of twenty verses². The first, which refers to the preremptory justice said to be meted out at Lydford ('Lydford law'), is probably the most familiar. Of the rest, two concern 'the Gubbings':

And near hereto's the Gubbins cave;
A people that no knowledge have
Of law, or god, or men:
Whom Caesar never yet subdued;
Who lawless live; of manners rude;
All savage in their den.

By whom, – if any pass that way,
He dares not the least time to stay,
For presently they howl;
Upon which signal they do muster
Their naked forces in a cluster,
Led forth by Roger Rowle.

The writer has been unable to trace any published account of the Gubbings which does not depend ultimately on those of Browne and Fuller. Leland, writing in the sixteenth century, made no reference to a wild, lawless people living on Dartmoor. Neither Risdon nor Pole, whose lives overlapped those of Browne and Fuller, mentioned the Gubbings³. Celia Fiennes travelled through Devon in 1698, as did Daniel Defoe a little over twenty years later. Although both were seekers after the unusual and interesting, it appears that neither came across the Gubbings⁴.

No source was cited by Fuller for his knowledge of the Gubbings. Rowe assumed that he heard of them while in Exeter in 1644-1647. It is possible that Fuller came to know of Browne's poem, but it would detract from his account if what Westcote regarded as a popular tavern song was its sole inspiration⁵. Discrepancies between Fuller's version and Browne's suggest that they arose independently. As well as spelling the tribe's name differently, Fuller mentioned the Civil Wars and the beginnings of the Gubbings' return to a civilised life. He said nothing of Roger Rowle, and Browne did not refer to the strumpets.

Whatever their origin, Fuller's comments were soon disputed. Although early editions of Camden's *Britannia* contained no reference to the Gubbings, Gibson in his revised and enlarged version of 1695 noted a village close to Brent Tor called 'The Gubbings'. He went on to state that Fuller was in error in describing its inhabitants as particularly lawless. This was repeated by Gough in a later edition, but he acknowledged Fuller's statement that the Gubbings were dying out. The Plymouth surgeon and diarist James Yonge visited Brent Tor (sic) in 1674. He regarded the inhabitants as 'rude and brutish' but believed that Fuller exaggerated their savagery and immorality. There has been disagreement also over Browne's account. An early printed version does not contain the verses above; nor do they appear in a major compilation of the poet's work published in the last century and based on manuscripts said to be in Browne's hand⁶. Confusion over the original form of *Lydford Journey* has been compounded by differing opinion as to when it was written. According to Worth, Browne wrote the poem after visiting a friend imprisoned in Lydford Castle during the Civil War. Rowe believed that it was composed in around 1644. Neither gave the sources of their information, but the visit of Browne to Lydford Castle had featured in a work of historical fiction in which it was stated also that *Lydford Journey* was conceived in around 1644⁷. Browne's poem, however, occurs in Westcote's *View of Devon*, a work which it is generally thought was completed in 1630. The nineteen verses include those concerning the Gubbings⁸.

Despite doubts over the original accounts, belief in the Gubbings lives on¹⁶. However, much now stems from fictional embellishment rather than recorded history. The Gubbings and Roger Rowle play a signal part in Anna Eliza Bray's *Warleigh*, first published in 1834. According to this story of deceit and love set in the time of the English Civil Wars, the Gubbings began their outlaw existence when the family and other relatives of a prosperous Lydford yeoman, John Gubbings took to Dartmoor to escape from Royalist troops led by Sir Richard Grenville. Sir Richard had a reputation for rapacity, and would imprison Parliamentarian and Royalist alike in order to exact a hefty ransom. One of his officers seduced the eldest daughter of John Gubbings. When the anxious and outraged father complained, the officer persuaded Grenville to arrest Gubbings and his sons as suspected Papists. They were imprisoned in Lydford castle, but soon set free as the result of a raid led by Roger Rowle, a rejected suitor of the daughter. Despite being hidden on Dartmoor, John Gubbings was recaptured and hanged – by his daughter's seducer and within full view of the house in which she was being kept. Swearing on the Blessed Virgin, Rowle promised revenge. Although at first they lived primarily by this vow, in the end their enforced isolation drove the Gubbings to indiscriminate lawlessness. Accounts of the Gubbings being particularly fearsome during the time of the Civil Wars may owe much to Bray. As regards Rowle, Bray described him as tall, stout, black-haired, reckless in bravery, loyal to his friends, and a man of his word. If *Lydford Journey* was intended primarily as satire, it is not impossible that the real Roger Rowle was no more than a well-known local wealding¹⁷. Although Charles Kingsley gave them only a minor role in *Westward Ho!*, which appeared in 1855, this also stimulated popular lore concerning the Gubbings. Set in Elizabethan times, one passage describes the slaying of their king by Salvation Yeo at the Rogues' Harbour Inn near the Gubbings' settlement by Brent-Tor. As a result the story grew that the Gubbings' leader was killed at the Dartmoor Inn, Lydford and lies beneath its floor¹⁸. Kingsley, like Bray, mentioned Catholic sympathizers among the Gubbings. Both may have fostered the suggestion that the Gubbings' return to Christianity and civilisation was hastened by Jesuit priests taking refuge among them¹⁹.

Until recently, the only support for the Gubbings ever having existed derived from uncorroborated anecdote. During the first half of the nineteenth century, Bray described hearing from those who could recall people named Gubbings living near Brentor in the late 1700s and being somewhat unruly. These were still in existence in the 1830s, by which time they had acquired the name *cramp-eaters* after the poor quality of their buns and cakes. Half a century later, Worth stated that families bearing the name Gubbings continued to dwell on Dartmoor. In 1900 Baring-Gould wrote that the descendants of Fuller's Gubbings were still stealing sheep, cattle and young horses from the fringes of the moor²⁰.

It appears to have been not until 1986 that verifiable evidence in favour of the Gubbings' existence was provided. Starkey drew attention to the grave in Bridestowe churchyard of the husband and wife William and Martha Gubbings who were buried in 1794 and 1793 respectively²¹. The present writer has perused the surviving registers and bishop's transcripts of the parishes in which the Gubbings' territory was said to lie. Lydford and Brentor, from their inception to the early years of the nineteenth century. Those of the neighbouring parishes – Sourton, Bridestowe, Lewtrenchard, Coryton, Mary Tavy and Peter Tavy – have been examined also.

The existing Lydford parish register dates from 1716, but relevant entries are not found until almost a century later. These refer to the baptisms between 1806 and 1815 of five children of the miller William Gibbings of Lydford Mill and his wife Elizabeth. The Bishop's transcripts date from 1610. Although incomplete and in places illegible, these

shed possible light on Roger Rowle. Among the burials listed are those of Margery Rowle in 1626 (?), Richard Rowle on 3 April 1663, John Rowell on 20 April 1664 and the widow Agnis Rowle on 18 April 1666²². The earliest existing volume of the register for Brentor parish covers the period 1720-1812, and the episcopal transcripts commence with 1606. There is no record of Gubbings or any similar surname²³.

As regards the peripheral parishes, the register and transcripts of Sourton each mention the marriage of William Gubbins to Martha Pidler on 6 November 1745. Entries in the Bridestowe register commence with 1696, and the bishop's transcripts date from 1609. As well as the records of the burials of the William and Martha mentioned by Starkey, there are a number of entries which concern people named Gubbins. There is a note also of the death of a Mary Gubbyn in 1675. The first record of interest is of the marriage of Leonard Gubbins in June 1668. His first child, Mary, died an infant; but the second, also named Mary, may be the woman who married Thomas Major in 1713. The baptism of Grace, daughter of John and Mary Gubbins was recorded in 1698, and that of their son Leonard two years later. It is possible that it was Grace who married Richard Gent at Bridestowe in 1739. The wife of another Leonard Gubbins gave birth to three sons: Leonard in 1711, William in 1714, and Thomas in 1718. The second of these is the William Gubbins buried in 1794. Thomas died as an infant, and none of the younger Leonards had issue baptised at Bridestowe. However, William and his wife had two daughters and then a son baptised between 1744 and 1756. One of the daughters may be the Martha Gubbins who married John Newton in 1775. Other entries of note concern the weddings of Elizabeth Gubbins to William Guscott in 1676 and of Mary Gubbins to John friend in 1730²⁴.

Entries in the Lewtrenchard register begin with the baptisms of 1706, but marriages and burials are not recorded until 1713. The earliest bishop's transcript is dated 1610. The Coryton register and its transcripts date from 1654 and 1603 respectively. The Mary Tavy register commenced in 1560. Entries copied for the bishop have survived from 1613. The first three registers of Peter Tavy were compiled between 1679 and 1813, and the bishop's transcripts date from 1614. Neither the name Gubbings nor any obvious variant appears in these records²⁵.

Examination of the appropriate parish records has revealed that during the seventeenth century and later people named Gubbins, Gubbyn or Gibbings were living in the broad area inhabited by Browne's Gubbins and Fuller's Gubbings. The records do not suggest an influx seeking baptism at around the time Fuller was writing, but give some credence to Browne's identification of their leader and his spelling of the tribe's name. Although modest, it is hoped that the findings will go some way towards adding a little more fact to the fiction which surrounds the Gubbings.

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DEVON LANDSCAPE ARTISTS: SAMUEL PROUT

Bill Ransom

Samuel Prout was born on 17 September 1783 at Plymouth. His fame rests mainly on his portrayal of picturesque European architecture and much has been written about him in that context. However, his early and less well-known work related to Devon and Cornwall. This article is concerned with this latter Westcountry work and his travels associated with it.

It is recorded that, when only four years old, the young Prout wandered out in the fields one hot autumn morning to gather nuts. Towards the end of the day he was found by a farmer lying under a hedge prostrated by sun-stroke and was brought home insensible. From that day onward he was subject to severe headaches recurring at short intervals and never enjoyed robust health. As a child the love of drawing occupied most of his leisure time and when he grew a little older he was fortunate in being placed under a schoolmaster – we do not know his name – who encouraged him to draw with increasing care. Long before he attended what we may assume to be his second school, the Plymouth Grammar School, he was drawing the carts and horses which stood outside a public house opposite his window, making sketches of landscape and copying prints.

His attendance at the Grammar School was most important, not perhaps primarily because of the artistic instruction he received but because, indirectly, it led to meeting the antiquary John Britton. At the Grammar School, too, Prout had a companion of relevance to his artistic career namely Benjamin Robert Haydon. (Haydon became the proud, self-willed painter of historical subjects who, soured by insufficient recognition and harrassed by debt, committed suicide). In company with Haydon, Prout sketched around Mount Edgumbe and about the byways and shores of Devon. He devoted 'whole days from dawn till night' states Ruskin 'to the study of the peculiar objects of his early interest, the ivy-mantled bridges, mossy water-mills and rock-built cottages which characterize the valley scenery' of that county. On 26 January 1796 a large East Indiaman, the *Dutton*, then chartered as a transport with troops for the West Indies was cast ashore under the Citadel, Plymouth and its wreck broke up on the beach. Ruskin continued: 'The wreck held together for many hours under the cliff, rolling to and for as the surges struck her. Haydon and Prout sat on the crags together and watched her vanish fragment by fragment into the gnashing foam. Both were equally awe-struck at the time; both failed, but Haydon, always incapable of acknowledging and remaining loyal to the majesty of what he had seen, lost himself in thunder and lightning. Prout struggled to some resemblance of the actual scene, and the effect upon his mind was never effaced!

Haydon's father was a bookseller in Plymouth and kept a reading room. Many who had literary or artistic tastes used to congregate there, amongst them the Reverend Dr. Bidlake, Master of the Grammar School, and Thomas Hewitt Williams whose sketches Prout was given to copy. John Britton, whose particular antiquarian interests were in topography and architecture, came to Plymouth for a few days in December 1801 on his way to Cornwall to collect materials for his *Beauties of England and Wales*. He seems to have found his way to this reading room and there made the acquaintance of Dr. Bidlake and his pupils. The sequel has been stated by Britton: 'Wishing to have draw-

ings of buildings and scenes in Cornwall for the Beauties of England I offered to take Mr Prout with me into that county and pay his expenses. His parents cheerfully agreed to this proposal and the youth was delighted with an anticipated treat. My intention was to enter at Saltash at the south-east corner of that county, walk thence to the Land's End, calling at, and examining, towns, seats, ancient buildings, and remarkable objects on or near to the line of the main public road'. Unfortunately for both author and artist the weather was poor and Prout was found generally to be insufficiently skilled to provide drawings suitable for engraving. Prout failed to draw acceptably the parish church at St Germain's (sic), the church tower of Probus and the church at Truro but had more success with picturesque subjects requiring less architectural precision. Thus Britton notes: 'On proceeding further we had occasion to visit certain druidical monuments, vast rocks, monastic wells, and stone crosses, on the moors north of Liskeard. Some of these objects my young friend delineated with smartness and tolerable accuracy. We proceeded to St Austel and thence to Ruan-Lany-horne, where we found comfortable and happy quarters in the house of the Rev. John Whitaker the historian of Manchester, and author of several other literary works. Prout, during his stay at Ruan, made five or six pleasing and picturesque sketches, one of these included the church, the parsonage, some cottages mixing with trees, the waters of the river Fall, the moors in the distance, and a fisherman's ragged cot in the foreground, raised against, and mixing with, a mass of rock – also, a broken boat, with nets, sails &c. in the foreground'.



Plympton Grammar School, Samuel Prout (1783-1852: Oil on Canvas), Plymouth City Museums and Art Gallery Collection.

Prout described his journey home and his future artistic intention in a letter to Britton of which the following is an extract: 'On Friday morning, after an unpleasant journey, I arrived at Plymouth, not without feeling much fatigue; the coach being bad but the roads worse. The weather have been very unpleasant. I hope the latter part of your journey has proved better than the former. The remembrance of Ruan will never be eradicated from my memory. I am at present very busy learning perspective. When better qualified to draw buildings, I will visit Launceston, Tavistock, &c, and try to make some correct sketches which may be proper for the "Beauties". My father is much obliged for your attentions to me, as I am, though conscious of my unworthiness. I hope you will favour me soon with the loan of a portfolio of drawings which you kindly promised to lend me to copy'.

Prout was also encouraged by Ambrose Bowden Johns, seven years his senior, who had an association, too, with Haydon the bookseller, for he was at one time apprenticed to him. It is recorded that Johns upon examining the young Prout's sketches and noticing the power shown in the drawing of old cottages and mills advised him to become a painter of architecture rather than of landscape. In his Devon works Prout was neither a pure landscape artist nor a topographical draughtsman. His subjects generally contain something man-made, either a building or shipping; architecture in a wide sense was seldom absent. (Later, in his continental scenes, true landscape was seldom present).

Prout worked hard and fast in his attempt to improve his skill in topographical drawing for it was as early as May in 1802 that he sent to Britton sketches of Launceston, Tavistock, Okchampton Castle and other places manifesting, as Britton says, very considerable improvement in perspective lines, proportions and architectural details. Some were engraved for the *Beauties of England and Wales, volume iv* and some for *The Antiquarian and Topographical Cabinet*.

In 1802 Prout determined to try his fortune in London and stayed with Britton at the latter's dwelling, 21 Wilderness Row, Goswell St. In the following year he had his first real success, his picture 'Bennet's Cottage on the Tamer near Plymouth' being hung at the Royal Academy and his address given as 10 Water Street, Brideswell Precinct. During his time with Britton he was employed in copying some of the best sketches and drawings possessed by Britton including some by Turner, Hearne, Alexander, Mackenzie and Cotman. He was also introduced to Benjamin West who gave him valuable advice on the principles of light and shadow. In 1805 he was forced to return through ill-health to Devon. A letter written at Plymouth by Prout to Britton dated 16 October 1805 and quoted by the writer J.L. Roget, shows something of his travels in Dartmoor: 'I am just returned after a months visit to the Dartmoors. I feel much strength from the influence of its pure air, and little Prout stands as firm as a lion. My object has not been so much to make sketches as to find health. She lives on the highest tors. I have her blessing.

'The subjects in my portfolio are generally rock-scenery, most of them colored and highly finished from nature. In my excursions on the moor from Torr-royal I saw several stone crosses, but most of them very plain. Piles of stone, very like cromlechs, but probably only known to the tinners or shepherds for shelter. I must not omit the mention of one days adventure in particular: A gentleman and myself, in spite of every remonstrance took horses to explore some parts of the moor, which is destitute of any habitation. To the surprise of many, our resolution carried us over its dangers and difficulties for twelve miles, not a trace of any road or footstep. I cannot describe the scenery as it impressed my mind. Masses of rock (to which the Cheeswring is a pebble)

crowning every hill and broken in the valley, like the desolated ruins of an extensive city-bogs two and three miles in width -- angry rivers foaming over broken paths of rock, awfully grand of itself, but as a whole more so from the terrific and savage wildness of its hills and vales. We found more trouble to lead our horses, than in finding our own safety. I was at the rise of the East and West Oak, Taw, and Dart rivers. Night coming on -- our fears troubling lest a mist should close on us, made us haste our steps to something like civilisation -- a moor-cottage -- but these are far from it in many respects. Unexpectedly we saw a very curious druidical circle (a proof with the crosses that Dartmoor was once at least partially inhabited, and might be known to the ancient Britons). I had not time to sketch, but it was double, each circle of about thirty stones, most of which were standing, and of the same proportion as the Hurlers-(thus' (here followed a plan of two circles touching) 'tis very perfect, and very conspicuous'. The surface of the moor is generally marked with rock of various sizes, but where the circles remain, scarce a chance stone is seen for a quarter of a mile. I was much pleased with the slight observance of it, but sorry I was so circumstanced that every moment was precious for our safety. I have made sketches of the vale at Lidford, Oakhampton and castle, the cross and chapel at South-Zeal, Crediton, the Logan stone.&c. Cold rains now keep me within doors, my time is industriously filled in preparation for a school, when settled I am at your service, and will forward something for the Beauties'.

Probably Prout remained in Plymouth for two or three years but in 1808 he was residing at 55 Poland St, London. In 1809 from that address he exhibited his first work at the British Institution, 'The Water-Mill and Manor House near Plymouth'. In the following year his name first appears in the catalogue of the third exhibition of the Associated Artists in Water Colours held at 16 Old Bond St, London where he had ten exhibits in all, six of Devonshire and two of Cornwall, the first Devonshire exhibit being 'Radford Mill'. In that year, too, he married Elizabeth, daughter of Captain Gillespie, a Cornish shipowner and settled at 4 Brixton Place, Stockwell, London. This period of time was clearly a busy one for Prout who was also engaged in teaching and produced many educational books which were published by R. Ackermann, 101 Strand, London.

In 1813 a set of eleven coloured plates drawn and etched by Prout and mostly of Devon and Cornwall cottages was published by T. Falser, Surrey Side, Westminster with the title 'Prout's Village Scenery'. In 1815 he first appeared as an exhibitor at the Society of Painters in Oil and Water Colours with a view 'Near Plymouth' and on 29 June 1819 was elected a Member. In all he exhibited 558 pictures there and additionally 30 works at the Associated Artists in Water Colours of which Society he was elected a Member in 1810. The great majority of exhibits at both societies were not of the Westcountry, the last explicit Devonshire view being 'On the Lid' in 1822 some 29 years prior to his last exhibit.

It is clear from contemporary and later accounts that Prout's skill lay in depicting the picturesque in architecture and placing it in a natural context. His style was large and simple but he was capable of showing precise architectural detail. His water-colours are essentially pen or pencil drawings tinted with sepia, brown or grey but he also painted a little in oils. Lockett gives a detailed account of his techniques.

In 1819 Prout made his first trip to Normandy which was succeeded by many more. In 1829 his reputation, already high, was enhanced by his appointment as Painter in Water-Colours in Ordinary to the King, and this was continued in the later reign of Queen Victoria. In the following year he was elected a Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries. He died of a stroke on the 9 February 1852 at 5 de Crespigny Terrace,

Denmark Hill, Camberwell.

Major collections of his works are to be seen in Devon at the North Devon Athenaeum, Barnstaple, the Royal Albert Memorial Museum, Exeter and the Plymouth City Museum and Art Gallery.

EXHIBITS BY SAMUEL PROUT AT THE ROYAL ACADEMY

<i>Address</i>	<i>10 Water St. Bridewell Precinct</i>
653	1803 'Bennet's Cottage on the Tamer near Plymouth'
662	1804 'St Keynes Well, Cornwall'
479	1805 'Oakhampton Castle, Devonshire'
481	" 'Farleigh Castle, Somersetshire'
493	" 'The Grand Porch to Malmesbury Abbey Church, Wiltshire'

<i>Address</i>	<i>55 Poland St.</i>
541	1808 'View on Dartmoor, Devon'
560	" 'Arthur's Castle at Tintagel, Cornwall'
253	1809 'The Birthplace of Sir. J. Reynolds, Plympton, Devon'
180	1810 'Tavistock, Devon'

<i>Address</i>	<i>7 Buxton Place, Stockwell</i>
436	1812 'Berry Castle Mill, Devon'
500	" 'Freshwater, Isle of Wight'
510	" 'Tavistock Abbey, Devon'
514	" 'Tremarton, Devon'
584	1813 'Zeal, Devon'
712	" 'A Calm'
726	" 'St Michael's Mount, Cornwall'
777	" 'View near Liskeard, Cornwall'
782	" 'View of Liskeard, Cornwall'
786	" 'St Ives, Cornwall'
787	" 'Freshwater Bay, Isle of Wight'
558	1814 'View of the Dart at Totness, Devon'

EXHIBITS AT THE BRITISH INSTITUTION

<i>Address</i>	<i>55 Poland Street</i>
261	1809 'The Water-mill and Manor House near Plymouth'
292	1810 'Sketch of the Fire at Billingsgate'
317	" 'A Sea Shore, near Teignmouth'

<i>Address</i>	<i>4 Brixton Place, Stockwell</i>
557	1814 'Margam, South Wales'
620	" 'Hulks at Plymouth'
651	" 'View of Monmouth'
594	1817 'A Wreck at Cromer'
268	1826 'The Ducal Palace, Venice'
553	1827 'Temple of Pallas, Rome'
558	" 'Hotel de Ville, Ghent'

Notes and References

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8. West, born in Pennsylvania in 1738, was one of the founder members of the Royal Academy and, on the death of Sir Joshua Reynolds in 1792, was elected President.
9. Prout was clearly in the vicinity of Cranmere Pool and the double circle must have been the Grey Wethers. R. Hansford Worth in his *Dartmoor* published in 1981 calculated from circle diameters that there would originally have been 29 stones in the north circle and 33 in the south, very close to Prout's estimate in 1805.
10. Quigley, J. *British Artists: Prout and Roberts*, Allan & Co. London 1926.
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THE PLYMOUTH TO TOTNES ROAD AFTER 1823

A.Brian George

The Bridges Act of 1803 stated that no bridge thereafter to be built in any county at the expense of any individual person(s) or corporate should be taken as a county bridge unless erected in a substantial and commodious manner under the direction of the County Surveyor, who was required to superintend the erection when requested by the person or parties concerned¹. Devon's County Surveyor from 1808 to 1841 was James Green and he took full advantage of this law, by persuading turnpike trusts and others that the acceptance of his plans for any necessary bridges (at a fee) would be part of the procedure for gaining his approval to their subsequent construction.

In the early 1820s, Green was receiving a salary of £550 per annum as County Surveyor, he was completing the construction of the Bude Canal, about to start the Torrington Canal and engaged on improving the Exeter Canal, a project which would extend over the decade from 1820 to 1830. At the same time he was keeping in close touch with the various turnpikes, Plymouth Eastern, Ashburton-Buckfastleigh, Exeter and Totnes. By 1820 he had proposed 14 miles of new road alignment on the Exeter-Plymouth route and 6 miles from Exeter to Tedburn St Mary.

Early in 1823, Lord Boringdon (later Lord Morley) was discussing the construction of a new bridge to replace the flying bridge he had established across the River Plym at Laira in 1807. His engineer was the brilliant James Meadows Rendel who would



Green's capacious bridge over the River Erme, looking towards Ermington. The smaller structure over the Ludbrook is in front of and beneath the photographer.

replace the flying bridge with his fine five arches in cast iron at Laira in 1827 to open better communications with the South Hams. On 2 May 1823 an Act of Parliament was passed to establish the need and authority for Laira bridge². Green must have become aware of this and on 7 April 1823 he deposited a plan with the Clerk of the Peace of Devon at the Castle, Exeter³. At that time various routes had been developed from the flying bridge via Plymstock and Elburton to Brixton but this plan went much further. Because he was so busy, Green employed the surveyor Richard Andrews to compile a survey at a scale of 5 inches to the mile over a length of 14 miles 4 furlongs and 7 chains. It suggested improvements and a new line of road now shown on the Ordnance Survey as part of A379 and A3121 (once B3210), that is, from the Plym estuary at Laira diverting through Ermington towards the junction with the Bittaford to Totnes road at the place now called Ladywell at SX 694567. Previously, travellers not using the flying bridge would have made their way from Plymouth to the river crossing at New Bridge, Plympton and then either from Linketty Lane to Brixton for Modbury or else through Ivybridge to Bittaford and Lady Down for Totnes. The deposit of Green and Andrews' plan was followed by an Act of Parliament on 17 June 1823⁴.

Commencing 400 yards from the prospective bridge site, the first deviation from the road through Plymstock suggested by Green was what is now the line of the road from Pomphlett Mill presently bypassing Plymstock to Elburton as a dual carriageway. Alternatives through Brixton and south of Brixton were shown but the line of the existing road through Yealmpton was maintained, with a short diversion south of the existing Yealm bridge to eliminate a skew crossing by the construction of a new bridge. A diversion south of the old alignment south of Way Farm which now exists from SX 610520 to SX 620520 was shown and next a diversion from SX 627520 to SX 632524 began what is the commencement of the road A3121 (once B3210) to Ermington. From SX 637528 to SX 661543 a new road took the traveller across the River Erme and up the valley to Ludbrook. The existing road was then followed to make a junction short of Ugbrook at SX 674553, bypassing the village to rejoin an existing road at SX 679557 and continue to Lady Down (Ladywell).

How quickly the work was done was unclear, but Green's proposals were closely followed by the Turnpike Trustees. He provided the plans and specifications for the new Yealm bridge and the two adjacent bridges over the River Erme and its tributary, the Ludbrook. The County Court agreed to share the cost of the bridges with the trustees⁵. The lengths of new road built were 4000 yards to bypass Plymstock, 1000 yards at Way Farm, 500 yards at the junction of A379 and A3121 (B3210), 3000 yards from Ermington to Ludbrook and 600 yards to bypass Ugbrook, a total of some 5 miles. A secondary purpose of the deposited plan and the subsequent Act of Parliament would have been to allow the Turnpike Trustees to widen all the road to a standard width and to allow some margin of deviation on either side of the proposed line from beginning to end.

Green's diversion, with a maximum gradient from the River Erme to past Ugbrook of 1 in 21, by once again using a stream valley, has produced a gradient for the road below his usual maximum design value of about 1 in 16, which he had used for his previous schemes for the Exeter Turnpike Trust. The old road from Bittaford towards Lady Down is exceptionally steep. The importance of the new road up the Ludbrook valley is shown by its original classification by the Ministry of Transport as B3210 and the more recent change by the Department of Transport to A3121. From Lady Down the road had always continued to the place we now know as Avonwick where New Bridge, South Brent (SX 697596) had been rebuilt by Green for the County over the River Avon in

1821. From this bridge a road continues to a point south of Totnes on the Totnes-Kingsbridge road, but in 1825 a three mile diversion was made just north of Sandwell to run directly to the town via Follaton. Green was asked to supervise the construction of a new bridge over the River Harbourne at SX 757598", eliminating a steep entry from the Kingsbridge road to Totnes.

The importance of this additional length was that a high standard turnpike road with easy gradients was then available from Plymouth directly to Totnes. The construction of a fine three-arch town bridge over the River Dart in Totnes by Charles Fowler in 1828 removed all river crossing difficulties between Plymouth and Torbay. Today this route from Laira to Totnes is very suitable for the private motorist travelling from Plymouth to Torbay. Unfortunately it is not clearly marked as a through route because of the wish of the highway authority to persuade the drivers of heavy goods vehicles to take routes more suitable for their seemingly ever increasing size and weight.

REFERENCES

1. Act of Parliament, 43 G III c 59
2. Act of Parliament, 4 G IV c 10
Also see Perkins, Keith S. 'Lord Morley's Flying Bridge' *The Devon Historian* 41 October 1990
3. Deposited plan No 54, Devon County Record Office, Exeter
4. Act of Parliament, 4 Geo IV c 109
5. Quarter Sessions Minutes, Epiphany 1824, Devon County Record Office, Exeter
6. Quarter Sessions Minutes, Epiphany 1825, Devon County Record Office, Exeter.

MICHAEL EVENS, VILLAGE CONSTABLE, TAILOR AND SMUGGLER

A. L.Sayers

This remarkable character had the wit to keep a diary in the early nineteenth century and his paradoxical occupations and movements are an interesting reflection on the attitudes of the time. Outwitting the excisemen was a fair, if illegal, gamble by respectable citizens including the clergy.

Michael Evens earned his living partly by travelling around the parish of Holbeton, South Devon making clothes for its inhabitants, partly by smuggling, and partly by being the village constable. His story starts in 1834' when he was twenty-seven years old when he boarded a vessel called the *Jane Ann* in August at Wadum (Wadbam), joined four brothers at Cawsand and sailed to Roscoff. There they met, amongst others, a spirit merchant by the name of Malleboy with whom they promised to 'deal honourably'. 'I counted a range of pipes in the cellar which amounted to 68...two very large valts containing twelve tuns of brandy each'.

They loaded their cargo, and sailed comfortably home until 'we discovered land and soon recognised it to be the Bolt. The wind now began to increase rapidly...and we were

obliged to retire further from the shore before daylight to prevent our being discovered'. '...Towards dusk we began to proceed slowly and cautiously towards the land and about 9 in the evening arrived at the shore...and after some trouble effected our purpose to the no small satisfaction of myself and crew...we were clear of everyting seizable in the Boat and proceeded without delay to Plymouth'.

Then in 1836 he kept a diary' for a couple of years of his daily doings. 'At Lambside to measure Robt. Giles for a coat and breeches...In the evening went to Tadmoor with 2 things for Northmore'. 'Things' of course refer to contraband, usually either brandy or tobacco. Thomas Hardy in his Dorset stories used the same word.

And so it continues 'February 17th. Carswell at work, in the evening making enquiries concerning the money stole from Mary Easten...the sum being 23£'.

March 3rd 'In the evening at Kingston to meet Steer & Heard of 75 of his things being dashed in pieces against the rocks on the Tuesday before'.

March 4th 'Church Wardens meeting for making new rate. 10. A daughter born about eleven in the forenoon, in the afternoon spreading old thatch over the orchd. 19...at St Anchorist on account of the Eliza's cargo but was prevented doing anything by the cutter'.

March 27th Sunday. 'My daughter christened after evening service and named after my two wives Elizabeth Jane (may she resemble them both for amicableness of disposition)'.

March 29th 'At Ridgeway Sessions with Precypss and to be resworn Constable of the Parish of Holbeton this being the time that the new Highway Act takes place'.

April 4th 'Sent after in morning by H. Tonkin Esqre to remove his servant H. Stone from his house on doing which he and I was serenaded with music on his departure from Pamfleet by all the workmen and boys on the premises, rattling and banging old tin kettles and pans and marching after him across the meadow received a crown from H. Tonkin for my trouble, cut a waisteote for Smith, sowed Union Seed in the evening at Ness and got 2 of Jn. Rowe's Spirit things which was brought home in the Car'.

April 9th 'Writing bills and receiving cash from sale in the evening near Stoke Church and landed about 41 of the Eliza's things'. However later that month the Revenue must have discovered part of the cargo and even Michael Evens had to shout murder on being accosted by the Revenue Officers.

On May 1st there was a great fire in Holbeton which 'originated at Mr. Rabbich's Bake House and consumed all the houses from there to the top of the street being 13 houses leaving 63 persons destitute of Habitation...'

June 10 was Holbeton Fair 'premiums awarded for the best cattle'.

June 15 'landed part of Hawks (cargo) at Caulston'. And so it goes on – a delightful mixture of making and mending clothes and smuggling with occasional constabulary work thrown in.

And he got around too. 'July 6 left England for Guernsey in the Steam Packet with Jane and returned on the 15th following'. On September 26 he bought a 3 year old pony for £8.

1838 Feb 13 'Walked home from Plymouth in the snow'.

24th 'At Carswell to work. Captain Bignell gave me 2 sovereigns for writing accounts. At night a Great Storm from the S.W. done great damage at Mothecome harbour, the sea washing down lime kiln'.

May 17 'Landed 25 things at Stoke Point'.

June 11 'Holbeton Annual Fair and Cattle Show'.

June 12 'Keeping up the Fair'.

June 28 'Queen Victoria crowned. Dinner given by subscription to all the Poor People and Children in this Parish. Procession of the greater part of the inhabitants of the Parish... Myself head the Procession with a Drawn Sword, Mace; about 500 dined'.

Sept 10th 'At Plymouth, sent 2 Hundred Weed with G. Kirkins to be carried to Wales'.

Oct 1 'Mr Henry Friend hung himself, fetched the Coroner'.

Nov 28 '...heard of part of James Chinowald's Cargo washing ashore, being a great storm in which Jn. Reeves Cargo was all lost and several vessels wrecked- the Eliza of Cawsand and Cargo lost, Philip Kingcome, Wm. Jenkins, T. Langdon and James Hardy drowned'.

1839 Jan 1. 'Left Holbeton by the Subscription Coach from Erme Bridge on the trial of Elizabeth Smale for stealing fowls from her Master Mr. May. Found guilty and sentenced to 4 weeks hard labour in Bridwell, 2 weeks of that time to be solitary confinement'.

On February 19 Michael landed 86 things at Rider's Hole. In June he assaulted the Collector of Laira Bridge (Plymouth) tolls for which he was fined 5/- at Yeabampton Sessions.

There was then a gap in the diary with a few entries for 1840 followed by a long gap of 23 years until 1863 March 10 when he 'attended tea of schoolchildren held in playground on occasion of marriage of Prince of Wales to Princess Alexandra' (afterwards King Edward VII).

So Michael Evens never had a dull moment and was obviously a man of initiative and intelligence. Not many could read and write at that time, and he presumably also amassed a fair amount of cash which enabled one of his successors to farm at Ramsland, Holbeton as well as two others who were landlords of the George Inn in the same parish. One of them in 1910 was responsible for Land Tax valuations for the parish. There was an Evens in the village until the late 1960s. The original of this diary is still in the hands of the Evens family.

References:

1. Evens - visit to France 1834- West Devon Record Office ACC1217.
2. Evens - Memorandum of Diary Occurrences 1836 (in the author's possession).

A. L. Sayers CBE has been farming in the parish of Holbeton, South Devon for the last 45 years. He was an elected member of Devon County Council and for a period its Leader and Chairman. In his retirement he is writing a history of Holbeton.

MINISTRY OF HOME SECURITY WAR BOOKS IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR.

Ian F Angus

'Possibly of more interest in 200 years time, always supposing that, by then, anybody will be able to read' - so wrote the erstwhile commander of the Lymptone Home Guard platoon, in his covering letter to the *Lymptone War Book* which he passed to the rector for safe keeping in 1955. In 1987, during a clearance of the rectory, a file was spotted beneath the stairs which it was thought might interest me, and so an interesting piece of local history was saved from the bonfire.

At first sight, the Lymptone War Book was not a very impressive looking document, being hand written on some twenty-two sides of foolscap. It soon became obvious that it was written to some sort of standard format or proforma. Sadly its author did not always repeat the question or heading of the proforma but merely wrote in the answer. However, some of the questions become apparent from the answers, and the lack of others does little to detract from the general interest contained in the War Book, with its fascinating details of local personalities, where they were living, and what they were doing. It is, in fact, a little gold mine to anyone interested in village affairs in 1940.

According to the Imperial War Museum, in the face of the threat of a German invasion of this country in 1940, all local civilian responsibilities were made the concern of 'Invasion Committees', each of which looked after the interests of its own district. These committees were to prepare War Books in accordance with a standard proforma issued by the Ministry of Home Security. Should hasty evacuation become necessary, the war books were to be destroyed. There are twenty-two parts starting with a statement of the perceived local invasion threat and continuing as a very detailed list of local assets and personal responsibilities with location and telephone number of the various key individuals.

The actual composition of the invasion committee gives a good idea of the amount of organisation that the threat of invasion brought into being in the early 1940s. A note on the front cover, probably by the same hand but seemingly a different pen, gives the dates of six meetings of the Invasion Committee, the first on 14 October 1941 and the last on 18 April 1944. This suggests that there must have been a lot of activity long before October for achievement of the degree of organisation stated in the War Book.

Headed by a chairman and deputy, with a nominated operational and alternative headquarters, the committee comprised representatives from the Police, Air Raid Precautions (ARP) including National Fire Service (NFS), Home Guard, and Women's Voluntary Service (WVS). There were Parish Organisers, a Voluntary Food Organiser and the Exeter Food Executive Officer's liaison officer. The local doctor spoke for local medical arrangements and the Parish Council had two representatives, both of whom were heavily involved in various aspects of the committee's work and, indeed, one was its chairman. Many of the functions in Lymptone were headed by parent bodies in Exmouth. Police control came under an Inspector and a Sergeant at the Exmouth Police station to whom Lymptone's Policeman Constable and twelve specials reported.

Part VII entitled 'Police' is of particular and probably wider interest as it specifies the policy and duties of the police which must have applied generally rather than just in Lymptone. Two states were specified, 'Stand To' and 'Action Stations'. On 'Stand To'

being ordered, the police were to enforce the 'Stand Firm' policy by controlling the roads and any movement of population likely to interfere with the operations of the armed forces. They were also to enforce the immobilisation of vehicles and control the display of notices. There were additional duties related to Security which could not be disclosed. When 'Action Stations' was ordered, in addition to the above the police were to assist the military in immobilising petrol pumps. Contingent on military requirements, roads needed by the military at certain periods might be closed to all traffic other than that of an operational character. At other times when such drastic restrictions were not necessary, civilian vehicles with EL labels might be allowed freedom of movement. Police were to man barriers at the exits from the town and non-essential vehicles were to be immobilised in convenient parking grounds. Pedestrian traffic was also to be controlled.

This 'Stand Firm' policy is interesting to compare to the elaborate arrangements during the Napoleonic invasion threat for 'flying the country'. It seems the 1940 lessons learned in France, where refugees had clogged roads and impeded the movement of military vehicles, were quickly taken to heart and policies put in place to avoid a similar state of affairs. Things did happen quickly in 1940, the threat of imminent invasion quickening authority's reactions and obtaining a rapid response in a time when 'action this day' orders were accepted without demur. It might also be of passing interest to note an apparent inconsistency between the ministry's instructions to destroy war books 'should hasty evacuation become necessary' and the police duty to implement a 'stand firm' policy!

The ARP and NFS arrangements in the village were also controlled from Exmouth. In the village there were two group wardens and fourteen wardens, including two specifically for the school. There were then four squads of fireguards, each with a nominated leader, covering specified parts of the village, with four auxiliary firefighters who could be called upon in an emergency. The Wotton Brook had been dammed in three places where concrete troughs enabled fire engine hoses to draw off water. There were no public or private air raid shelters and the committee decided not to dig slit trenches in the belief that 'plenty of shelter was to be found in deep lanes with high banks', suggesting this policy had been devised before air raids started in earnest. Neither were there any provisions in Lympstone for decontamination following mustard gas or similar attacks.

There were sixty-four members of the local Home Guard platoon, the War Book recording 'ii Very few, say 5' leaving us to guess whether this referred to equipment or trained personnel!

The Local Food Officer made arrangements for eight days' emergency rations to be stored in the village and for the local store to be used as a distribution centre. Six members of WVS and seven others were nominated to help with the distribution while arrangements for an emergency field kitchen behind the Village Hall were made. Members of the WVS were trained under a Group Housewife to provide hot drinks in an emergency, to shelter casualties until help arrived, to care for invalids and the aged and to assist mothers with small children. The WVS also helped in the Rest Centre and held a store of clothing. The local doctor set up a First Aid Point in his own house, staffed by himself and one trained nurse and the district nurse. There was a first aid party of two partly trained nurses. Accommodation could be provided for ten in the doctor's house and one hundred in the Methodist Schoolroom, normally used as a service canteen, but it appears there were only three actual beds available. Stretchers were located at three points and instructions issued on how to get the wheeled bier out of the church.

There were plans to set up rest centres at three locations catering for 113 people under the supervision of the rector. There were also provisions for billeting soldiers 'passing through', 150 being in private houses and 400 in eight local barns. Two local builders were noted as sources of emergency labour supported by 'all the fishermen who are at home'. The two builders could provide planks, poles, ladders, wheelbarrows, picks and shovels. It was also noted that there were two picks and shovels available in the ARP squad giving the impression that such items were in relatively short supply. Two local farmers would be able to provide four horses, three wagons and three carts as emergency transport.

Emergency supplies of water were to be obtained from local wells and pumps but the public were to be warned to boil all water for drinking. An interesting schedule lists the location of eighteen pumps known to be working and a further eleven that 'could probably be made to work'. In Part XXI, dealing with 'Sanitation' the author again fails to repeat the question leaving the reader to ponder, with a certain amount of trepidation, on the answer - 'a. Old Laundry in Old Fire Fighting Field, gardens. b. (blank)'.

A messenger service was to be run by 1st Lympstone Company, Boys Brigade, mounted on cycles. Information was to be conveyed by notice boards located outside the Police Station and the Church. Loudspeaker vans were also mentioned.

The War Book concluded by commenting on the morbid subject of the burial of the dead, making the remarkably optimistic comment that there was 'ample space in Lympstone Churchyard' and the reassuring view that Mr Tapscott, churchwarden and undertaker, 'having had extensive experience of mortuary arrangements in the RAF during the last war, would be quite capable of making all necessary arrangements' - in the emergency mortuary to be set up in the Old Drill Hall.

The War Book names some seventy individuals (excluding members of the Home Guard), their addresses (including telephone numbers) and their responsibilities. It gives an idea of the great willingness of people prepared to take on various duties and to be of service to others in emergencies during World War Two. In the main, they must have been the middle aged or older members of the village, the younger ones being either in one of the services or intending to join.

The Imperial War Museum was pleased to copy the Lympstone version as this brought its collection of War Books up to three! At the same time we 'lent' Devon Record Office a copy which was the first it had received. Considering that in 1940 every town and village in the country must have been charged with the task of preparing one, it seems astonishing that only three versions ever reached the War Museum and only one the Devon Record Office. This led me to do a quick trawl of the Record Offices in the South West and I found that the West Devon Area has none, Dorset three, Somerset four and Cornwall nineteen, which may or may not be the Ministry of Home Security version. As yet I have not had the opportunity of seeing whether the Public Record Office has a copy of the original proforma or any completed war books.

The defence of Britain project was launched locally at a symposium held in Exeter in June 1995 when I briefly mentioned War Books and suggested people might be on the look-out for them.

(Ian Angus, TD, B.Sc., is a northcountryman but has lived in Devon for 35 years. He is vice-chairman of Lympstone Local History Society with a particular interest in aspects concerned with the armed services. Since completing his article he has circulated all Record Offices in the South West with consolidated lists of the results of his War Book studies.)

THE DEVON SMITHY, WHIMPLE.

R J Shepherd

If you have ever travelled the A30 between Exeter and Honiton and dared to take your eyes away from the deluge of traffic heading westward, you will have noticed nestling amongst the trees in the fork of the junction to Ottery St. Mary a rather interesting looking building in a unique style. Outside is displayed a sign 'The Old Devon Smithy – Bed and Breakfast Accommodation'. The present interior decoration is somewhat different from that which existed in 1929 when the building was first constructed by James Arthur Radford Stevenson, or 'JARS' as he became known in the area.

Born in 1901, Stevenson was the son of a property owner in Yorkshire. He was educated at Harrow which he left in 1919. After this he spent six years not knowing what to make of his life. He had held a short service commission in the RAF, worked at a bench in an aircraft factory and was at one time a freelance journalist and then a reporter on a London daily paper. In 1925 he went to Canada in a tramp-ship with the idea of finding a job of work there, but was unsuccessful.

In January of 1926 at the age of twenty-five he became anxious about his future and decided that he would settle down in New Zealand and be a farmer. Whilst waiting for a ship to take him there he apprenticed himself to the blacksmith at Payhembury, where he learned to shoe horses. He had made friends with the miller, Donald Granger, in 1924 and became quite attached to Tuck Mill where he eventually took lodgings. His home was in the Budleigh Salterton area and his mother took him to his lodgings on Monday and fetched him again on Saturday.

He occasionally would mend farm implements and when time permitted he would make pokers, tongs, shovels and such-like trifles and it gradually became clear to him that he liked working in iron. Thereafter his ideas about New Zealand underwent a change and he began looking for a smithy of his own. With the help of his father he set about looking for a suitable establishment. Wandering the countryside between Prickly Pear and Ottery St. Mary in June 1926 he heard the ringing of an anvil and eventually found the source of the sound at West Hill. The smith was a friendly old person called Harry Potter with whom he struck up a conversation. There was little discussion and by a simple transaction, sealed with a tankard of cider apiece, the smithy became his and Harry Potter stayed on to work for him. He christened that forge 'The Devon Smithy'.

In two years from first picking up a hammer, he became the owner of an established smithy with an experienced workman on his staff. The people of West Hill thought he was 'barmy' and referred to him as 'that upstart young blacksmith'. 'But', he said 'the Devon folk have warm hearts and gentle instincts and always gave me a greeting and a friendly word even when they were down on their luck'.

He continued to work with Harry Potter, improving his skills in the art of decorative wrought iron work. His mother was obviously an excellent advocate and this brought him several commissions from the Budleigh Salterton area and from many aristocratic connections. His workload continued to increase from titled

personages throughout the country and early in 1927 he extended the smithy at West Hill and engaged Ted Stott to help cope with all the orders.

In January 1929 he secured a large order for thirteen balconies for Henry Glave Ltd, drapers in New Oxford Street. The largest of these was 19ft 6in in length, and working conditions at West Hill became extremely cramped. So, with the aid of 'A kind uncle', the Rt. Hon. Walter Runciman, he bought the land at Straightway Head from Major Imbert-Terry and commissioned his friend, the architect H.E. Robertson, to design the new building. He wanted to make that smithy unique in its way and wished it to be the best looking place that could be built with the money available. 'The specification was a good one; Robertson had seen to that, providing for the finest bricks and tiles and English Oak and Vita glass for the windows'.

In May 1929 the construction was well under way and in October the building was complete. The move from West Hill was accomplished in one day with the loss of only one day's work. The new smithy had been wired and a concrete bed laid in the engine-room, and electric power was provided. The building seen today is virtually the same in outward appearance as when it was first constructed.

Samples of the workmanship from the Devon Smithy which can now be seen include:- 13 ft high gates at SWEB, Moor Lane, Sowton, Exeter, made originally for the Exe Valley Electricity Company; entrance gates for the home of Eden Phillpotts, the author, at Broadclyst, and for Sir John Kennaway at Escot estate; large decorative hinges for Buckfast Abbey; weather vane on Harpford Church; two pairs of gates for Mrs. Luttrell of Dunster Castle, and the Miller Memorial Gates in the Bill Yard at Harrow School. There are many others.

The most exciting moment in the history of the Devon Smithy came one morning in the early part of June 1931. 'Arriving at the Smithy I found a letter addressed to me from the Crown Estate Office, Windsor Great Park. It wished to know whether I would be prepared to carry out work for HRH. The Prince of Wales at Fort Belvedere, the Prince's Sunningdale Residence. On August 10th I received the intimation that I was to proceed with the making of a grille. It was a great honour for the Smithy and I was determined that we should put fine workmanship into that piece'.

For that work he hoped for a Royal Appointment but it was never awarded.

There was a constant stream of visitors to the Devon Smithy, one of whom was HRH. The Duke of Connaught on Wednesday 9 December, 1931. Hector Whistler, cousin of the famous artist, lived in Whimble for a while and did some design work for 'JARS'. He scratched his signature in a window at the smithy, and it is still there today, as is an inscription by Benno Moiseiwitsch, the famous pianist.

After purchasing for himself a brand new Rolls Royce 'JARS' eventually sold the business to Henry Lewis, the local builder, in 1938. Stevenson was just thirty-seven years of age at this time and had been in business as a blacksmith for twelve years. His reasons for selling up after such a relatively short career are a matter of some speculation.

Stevenson's influence remained after his departure and a number of features and designs were prevalent in the work which followed. Ted Stott remained the senior smith for some years and Jack Lovering, whom Ted trained, was his able assistant. The present Whimble Church gates are a product of this skilled duo and they display a number of smithing techniques of the Stevenson era.

The information for this piece has come mainly from the book *The Din of a Smithy* written by Stevenson in 1932, although there are still people locally with recollections of him. He also published a booklet called *Crafty Smiths* but a copy of this has not yet come to light.

Whimble History Society conducted a symposium on J.A.R. Stevenson and the Devon Smithy on Friday 8 March 1996 and there was an excellent attendance despite a cold and stormy night. Any further information would be welcomed by this society. Please contact the secretary, Mrs. D. Rastall on 01404 822486 or the chairman, John Shepherd, on 01404-822076.

(R. J. Shepherd is Chairman of Whimble History Society)

STOP PRESS

Owing to unforeseen circumstances, it will not be possible to hold the DHS Spring meeting at Lypstone, as announced at the AGM. Instead, the meeting on 5 April will be held at Woodbury. (Details are being circulated to members).

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)

Devon Household Accounts 1617-59, Part I: Sir Richard and Lady Reynell of Forde (1627-48), John Willoughby of Leyhill (1644-6) and Sir Edward Wise of Sydenham (1655-9), edited with an Introduction by Todd Gray. Devon and Cornwall Record Society. New Series 38, 1995. 1ii + 282 pp. Copies available at £15 from the Society, 7 The Close, Exeter, EX1 1EZ. ISBN 0 901853 38 1.

This is a delightful book, a Caroline Horn of Plenty. Dr. Todd Gray has used his considerable experience in editing historical manuscripts and his deep knowledge of Devon local history in editing three household accounts of the first half of the seventeenth century. The work is of exceptional interest and scholarship and will both augment and illuminate this branch of social history.

Although the accounts together cover a period of rising religious and political controversy culminating in the years of the Civil War and the Commonwealth, and refer to the collection of Parliamentary taxes, the forced maintenance of garrisons and the cost and effects of billeting turbulent and unsaintly soldiers in the houses of the gentry, they are primarily concerned with recording basic items of household expenditure. They were kept meticulously, week by week, a remarkably complete record of the purchase of food and drink, of building repairs, journeys, medical care bestowed on both humans and animals, luxuries, garden needs, the wages of both indoor and outdoor servants, craftsmen and itinerant labourers, together with items of clothing. Their prime function was to keep a check on all expenditure, avoid waste and prevent fraud: the arithmetic was faultless.

In his substantial Introduction Dr Gray emphasises that the households of the gentry, swollen as they were with relatives, servants and officials, were in no way comparable in grandeur and expenditure with those of the aristocracy. They do, however, present a microcosm of such living and all three of these accounts indicate that the Devon gentry of the early-seventeenth century lived very well indeed.

To counteract the inevitable monotony of the accounts themselves Dr Gray describes the genealogy and background of each of the families. Maps and his own photographs complement the text and an analysis is provided of the commodities available to each household. Here is infinite variety and the diversity is convincingly explained by the location of each household, its proximity to sea or river, local markets and fairs, the city of Exeter and access to a port with overseas connections or the superior markets of London. Seasonal variety of supplies is very marked. One household will buy immense quantities of very cheap oysters, another enjoys salmon and the relatively-expensive rabbit. Dr Gray draws attention to the large sums expended on spices, wine, dried fruits and sugar, notably for weddings, funerals and, especially, for christenings. Even civil war caused little economic disturbance. Prices did not rise appreciably, there was no obvious scarcity, and labour was always available. Legislation and public opinion may have deprived the nation of its mince pies at Christmas but in these gentry households there was no lack of turkey or salmon pies.

A rather more complete Glossary of obsolete words might have been helpful to read-

ers, but this is a minor desideratum in a book of outstanding interest to which readers will often return with pleasure and anticipation – a book for all seasons.

Ann Cronne

History of the Naval Victualling Department and its Association with Plymouth: by Len Stephens. 1996. 78 pp. illustrated, the Old Plymouth Society. £2.50, incl p + p, from 625 Budshhead Road, Whiteleigh, Plymouth PL5 4DW.

The author has produced a compact history both of the methods of victualling the royal ships from the Middle Ages down to the present day and of Plymouth's part in supplying the fleet with its food, drink and related stores. The medieval system of placing the responsibility on towns for providing fully equipped ships was replaced under the Tudors by a network of contractors supplying in wartime both the vessels of the permanent fleet and those taken up by the Crown. Under Elizabeth I there was a general supervision by the newly formed Victualling Office in London but much depended on the probity of the contractors. In Plymouth the Hawkins family cornered the business but shortage of supplies and cash made the victualling of Howard's ships in 1588 difficult, but the men were fed. This was more than could be said for those in the squadrons sent to Cadiz and Rhe under the corrupt administration of Buckingham's protege Sir James (bottomless) Bagge in the 1620s.

With the Commonwealth Plymouth got a resident agent of the Navy Commissioners who set up office at Lambhay overlooking Sutton Harbour on land which was to become the Navy's main victualling yard in the South West. From then on development continued steadily. The completion of Plymouth Dock meant an awkward distance of three miles between the two yards. Local interests defeated repeated proposals to build a new victualling establishment at Empacombe on the opposite side of the Hamoaze and so the Lambhay site was extended to include another bakehouse and more stores. A brewery was set up on the Cornish bank. Many basic rations were by now furnished by the London Victualling Office but as the eighteenth century continued more and more biscuit, beer and meat was provided from Plymouth. Towards the end of the century the victualling yard had eighty-six storehouses and other buildings at Lambhay but its separation from Plymouth Dock and the ships lying in the Hamoaze was proving ever more inconvenient. In 1824 Sir John Rennie was commissioned to design what was to be known as the Royal William Yard. Completed in 1835 and held to be one of the grandest monuments of nineteenth century England, it contained the most modern steam driven equipment for milling, baking and brewing as well as facilities for all the stores previously held at Lambhay.

From the middle of Queen Victoria's reign the nature of the stores began to change – meat came in tins and not in casks – and there were far more items connected with the improved conditions for seamen, including uniforms. These changes continued in the twentieth century. The yard escaped damage in both wars and its facilities were constantly being adjusted to meet the changing needs of the Navy. Then in 1985 the government announced its closure which was completed in 1992. The Navy's victualling was transferred to the NAAFI.

The author is understandably sad at the ending of this part of Plymouth's relations with the Royal Navy and at the apparent lack of any real plan for the yard's future. It is a pity that Plymouth and Whitehall together could not have decided on the civilian use of the Royal William during the long period of its rundown. It is not practical to

loss a few million to a local authority and to tell them to get on with the development of an historic building as a means of creating employment and tourism while at the same time preserving its historic character. This is a problem likely to be of continual concern to historians. Mr Stephens has told his fascinating story well and concisely. The illustrations, both line drawings and photographs are good. My only regret is that he did not find it possible to include a plan showing the whereabouts of the places mentioned.

Adrian Reed

Shipwrecks of the South Hams. The Wreckwalkers Guide to the Coast Path from Erme to Dart by Kendall McDonald. Wreckwalker Books, Cradles Cottage, Thurlestone, Devon TQ7 3NE. 1996. 132pp. illustrated. £9.95 or £11.00 from publisher (inc. pp). ISBN 1 871330 18 1.

The south Devon coast from the Erme to the Dart with its deceptive bays, high cliffs with rock strewn bases and offshore hidden reefs has been the destruction of many ships over the centuries. The author's earliest wreck is around 1000 B.C. and his latest 1992. The causes in the days of sail were generally three: inability to find the ship's position, storm damage which made the ship unmanageable, and faulty navigation in taking the ship too close inshore, or a combination of these. The author gives plenty of examples. With continual bad weather making it impossible to take observations by day or night a master forced to rely on dead reckoning and his lead line could mistake Finisterre for the Lizard or if bound for the Bristol Channel miss it altogether. Steamers were equally vulnerable to fog and also prone to stand too close inshore but they could ride out most gales, though, with the sailing ships they were exposed to the risks of war.

The author divides the coast path into six separate but continuous walks, each with a map indicating the position of its wrecks. Of these there is seldom anything to see except the occasional rusty bow plate or boiler at low tide. Further out boats and flags may indicate divers exploring one. However, there are a few accessible beaches on which fragments of Chinese porcelain and even coins have been found but you must buy the book to find out which these are! Relics of some of the ships can be seen locally or in museums. A few are in or near the pubs conveniently placed, and recommended by the author, to refresh the reader.

Each of the seventy-two wrecks chosen is described with an account of the events leading to the loss of the ship concerned where this information is available. Naturally there is none about the Bronze Age tin trader but most of the others are well documented. There are only a dozen earlier than 1800 and several of these are warships and so the subject of official inquiries. The greatest loss of life was in HMS *Ramillies* off Bolt Tail in 1760, the most ominous for the future the Russian petroleum carrier *Blesk* which in 1896 hit the Gray Stone and in breaking up is claimed to have given Europe its first large oil slick. More happily, the Albert Medal was instituted as a result of bravery in saving life from one ship. Indeed, there are many stories of courage both by Coastguards and lifeboatmen as well as by volunteers. The introduction of the rocket launched line was perhaps the most important aid to saving life on a rockbound coast. Incidents of the maltreatment of survivors are not recorded after the eighteenth century but the last wreck looted was in 1992!

The illustrations are helpful: in particular as many of the photographs show the

ships on the rocks which they hit so letting the reader fix the position of the actual wrecks for himself. The vessels selected are interesting and the book can be read with pleasure even by those not minded to follow the coastal footpath.

Adrian Reed

Exploring the Lower Walkham Valley, by Paul Rendell, Forest Publishing, 1996. 36pp, 2 x ill. 14 x b&w. £3.00.

Paul Rendell is a well-established Dartmoor guide, who has previously produced useful pamphlets and articles, aimed at awakening people to the joys of walking and exploring Dartmoor and particularly its interesting past. In this booklet we are guided through the lower section of the Walkham valley, one of south-west Dartmoor's lesser known 'gems' and an area filled with remains from past industries. The book has chapters on mining, lesser industries, viaducts, Grenofen Manor, flora and fauna. A sixth chapter guides us through the route of a suggested walk to explore the valley. There are two well-annotated maps depicting features mentioned in the text and there is a total of fourteen monochrome photographs, showing views and life in the area in times past. At the rear of the booklet is a Glossary, Bibliography and a list of useful addresses.

The style of the text is generally quite easy to read though one or two clumsy sentences should have been weeded out at the editing stage. There is a good deal of background historical information, though sadly none of it is referenced, so further investigation by the reader would be difficult. However, as this is essentially a guide book perhaps this can be excused. The glossary of mining terms is far from comprehensive and several terms used in the text are missing such as 'stopping', 'whim', 'mortarstones' and 'gangue'. The largest section of the booklet covers mining of copper, lead, tin and arsenic. Mining processes and techniques are explained where appropriate and brief site descriptions of six of the main mines in the valley are given, together with locations of the smaller sites, all with OS grid references, offering a good basis for the reader to commence exploration. Lesser industries, which includes the rather bizarre mill that once produced violin strings and sausages, are given less attention, and are summarized on a single page. The use of old photographs in all sections of the book adds greatly to the interest. For example the images of the Grenofen Viaduct, which has since been demolished, record a view which is very different today. Flora and fauna likely to be encountered while exploring the area are described in chapter 5, where the author encourages us to be observant at all times. The suggested walk offered, which is clearly marked on one of the maps, takes in many of the sites mentioned in the text and includes other important information such as location of amenities, which OS map to take, and how to get to the start point using the bus.

Altogether this booklet is a good introduction to the Lower Walkham Valley which will greatly enhance the explorations of those new to the area and at just £3 is good value.

Phil Newman

The Church on the Hill: an account of the church, people, and parish of Buckfastleigh by Helen Harris. Devon Books, 1996. 96pp. illus. £9.95. Royalties to church funds. ISBN 1 86114 907 6

It was a very special pleasure, for several reasons, to review Helen Harris's latest work. Her research is always thorough; she writes in a pleasant, friendly way and presents her material in a model form which should be followed by all writers of local history. On this occasion however she writes from personal knowledge, being born not far from the church and baptised in its Norman font. There are two other reasons why I have particularly enjoyed reading *The Church on the Hill*. My last task as a professional librarian was to move Buckfastleigh library to a new home and this took me through the town on many occasions, but it gave me little time to look into the little byways to the left and right of Chapel Street and elsewhere; later I was to see its outline against the sky as I made weekly visits along the A38 on my way to work in the library at Buckfast Abbey.

This well-documented work tells the story of the town and the history of Buckfast Abbey and its monks (and other now long-gone events like the races) but its main object is to recount the story of the Church of Holy Trinity throughout its history, to record what happened on the night of the arson attack in July 1992 and to tell what has been done so far to restore its fabric. Mrs Harris's 97-year-old aunt was a life-long worker for the Church and it is with a personal feeling of loss that this section is written. One important conservation task has been completed. The font, originally thought to be damaged beyond repair, has been restored; it is now in St. Luke's Church and again used for baptisms.

Another ancestor, her maternal great-great-grandmother Helena Louisa Worrall played a major role in the development of parish education in Buckfastleigh. All was not well at the school in 1849; its 'Master not mild and gentle enough, Mistress quite inefficient'. Like in many other small towns, the Church of England had a nonconformist rival, a British School with nearly as many pupils.

The story of the notorious Cabells is well-known after recent airings in the 'media' and the square sepulchre is familiar to all visitors, its bars being said to 'keep Cabell in' rather than to prevent illegal entry from outside.

Finally a note of congratulation to Devon Books; the quality of both text and illustrations is excellent. There is also a detailed index.

John Pike

The **Old Plymouth Society** has published its third information booklet, 'Tracing Plymouth's History through Memorials, Tablets and Plaques'. This is a valuable piece of work by Ray Bush, with a list of 124 and a map on which many of the locations are marked.

Minutes of the 26th Annual General Meeting held in the School of Education, University of Exeter, 19 October 1996.

Present: the President, Dr Basil Greenhill in the Chair; 38 members of the Society [names listed in attendance register].

Before the start of business, the Chairman, Mr Adrian Reed, invited members to observe a minute's silence in remembrance of Professor Walter Minchinton (d. 26 Aug. 1996), former Chairman of the Society and honorary life member.

1. Apologies: Miss P. Costella, Mr A. Gore, Dr A. Grant, Dr T. & Mrs E. Greeves, Professor N. Orme, Mrs M. Stanbrook, Mr R. Stanes.
2. Minutes: of the 25th AGM 1995, printed in *DH* 52, were confirmed and signed. There were no matters arising.
3. Hon. General Secretary's report: Mrs S. Stirling reported that the Hon. Editor, Mrs Helen Harris, had given a talk on the Society and its journal at the Devon Local History Week in February. The Society had contributed to the publication of a Festschrift to the retiring County Archivist, Mrs Margery Rowe, in recognition of her great services to local history. The Hon. Secretary had attended the presentation in June. Officers of the Society welcomed Professor Christopher Ehrington outside the Cathedral during his nationwide 'Hike for History' in August, raising funds for the revival of the Victoria County History, to which cause the Society has made a modest contribution.
Both March (Crediton) and July (Chulmleigh) conferences were well attended, proving again the importance of involving the local society wherever meetings are held. Thanks were expressed to Mr K. Stoneman for organising the Crediton meeting and for his talk on Crediton charities. A talk on Crediton Church was followed by a meal in the Boniface Centre and Professor Roger Kain's illustrated talk on Devon title maps. Anne Evans, Richard Bass and members of the Chulmleigh & District History Society provided an interesting and enjoyable day, ending with an adventurous exploration of the ruins and new building works at Eggesford House.
Council meetings had concentrated on projects to benefit members: firstly, at the instigation of the Chairman, Mr Reed, the compilation of a local history handbook had been put in hand; secondly, thanks to the efforts of the Treasurer, Mr Haydon, the Society had pursued ways to foster interest in local history in school children.
Members of Council had greatly appreciated the President and Mrs Greenhill's invitation to visit Catehele, followed by tea at Bohetherick.
Mrs Stirling thanked the Hon. Membership Secretary, Mr J. Pike, for providing the lists and labels which made possible her thrice-yearly mailings to members.
The President thanked Mrs Stirling for her report.
4. Report on membership: The Vicechairman and Membership Secretary, Mr J. Pike, emphasised the need to recruit, since membership had fallen from past levels of 500-600 to the current 354. He recommended a policy of each one bring one. Five members of Council had recently attended seminars for primary schools in Devon to discover how the Society could strengthen links with schools and foster pupils' interest in local history. Professor J. Youings pointed out that teachers were often

no longer resident in the village where their school was situated and the need was for local volunteers from the Society to talk to children in schools about their own history. Miss M. Bird suggested recruitment could be improved by offering practical help to those wishing to set up a local society, especially in drafting a constitution. Mr I. Maxted, referring to the projected Handbook, said that the section on 'Setting up a Local History Society' might be published ahead of the complete work. The Treasurer suggested that affiliation at a reduced fee, instead of the current corporate membership subscription, might encourage more local societies to join the Devon History Society.

The President concluded the discussion by recommending word of mouth as the best way to win new members.

5. Hon. Treasurer's report: Mr E. Haydon reported on the financial year from 1 May 1995 to 30 April 1996. Following an increase in rates, subscription income had risen by some £1,700, sales had fallen to £10 but there had been a reduction in out-goings on postage and fees. The Society had for the first time an excess of income over expenditure of £56. However members would observe that the Savings Account had increased by some £1,900 and so the real excess of income approached £2,000. The President warmly congratulated the Treasurer on his accounts, which were approved by the meeting. A vote of thanks was proposed to Mr A W F Gore, who was once more appointed as the Society's official independent examiner for 1996-7.
6. Hon. Editor's report: Mrs H Harris reported that *The Devon Historian* nos. 52 and 53 had been published and circulated, with a good variety of articles and county-wide coverage, though more material on west Devon was needed. As the millennium approached, Mrs Harris recommended local historians to record events of the present century. Contributors' standards of presentation (as required in the journal, p.2) continued to improve, though the need for double-spacing was still sometimes overlooked. Members were reminded that the deadline for issue no.54 was 30 November.
7. Election of President: The Chairman thanked Dr Greenhill for his three-year term as President, during which time he had been a source of advice and support to the officers. A formal vote of thanks was passed by the meeting. In reply, Dr Greenhill stated that it had been a great pleasure to serve the Society and he and his wife looked forward to its strengthening over the years. Dr Greenhill then nominated Dr Harold Fox, a distinguished academic and founder member of the Society, as his successor. This was approved by the meeting. Dr Fox took the Chair and said his nomination was a great honour in view of the lustre of past Presidents. His first paper contributed to *The Devon Historian* had been in 1973.
8. Election of Officers and Council for 1996-7. The current Officers were proposed, seconded and elected. The three Council members standing down under the three-year rule (Dr A. Grant, Dr T. Gray, Mr S. Timms) were re-elected *en bloc*. Dr T. Greeves and Mr P. Rendell having resigned, Mr R. Bass and Dr S. Bhanji were proposed, seconded and elected to the vacant places on Council. Professor J. Youings would again be co-opted to Council and Mrs A. Langridge had also been invited to serve.

9. Conference programme for 1997. Mrs Stirling reported that the spring meeting would be at Lympstone on 5 April, by kind invitation of the Lympstone Society. The summer conference on 12 July, would be a joint meeting with the Cornwall Association of Local Historians and based at Millbrook village and Mount Edgcumbe. Suggestions for future occasions included Uffculme, Membury and Totnes. Dr Fox offered to lead a field excursion with a coastal theme at some future date.

The 1997 AGM would be held on 11 October. Mr Paul Booth of the University of Liverpool (Medieval History) would be the morning speaker.

10. Any other business. Following the success of Devon Local History Week (with some 1000 attenders) in February, Mr Maxted said it had been decided to hold a Devon Heritage Week, 29 September to 4 October 1997. The library foyer and music room would be available and local groups from all over Devon could apply for a 'slot'. Museums in the county would arrange special sessions and local history books might be launched, including the Society's handbook *In pursuit of local history*.

THE DEVON HISTORY SOCIETY'S NEW PRESIDENT

Dr Harold Fox has been studying Devon history since, as an undergraduate, he carried out research on medieval farming systems at Stokeinteignhead which he submitted for a college essay prize, winning 'through lack of any other competitors'. He was brought up at Dartmouth and educated at Dartmouth and Churston Ferrers Grammar Schools, University College London and St. Catherine's College Cambridge.

Dr Fox has taught at Cambridge University and the Queen's University of Belfast and is currently Senior Lecturer in English Topography at the University of Leicester's Department of English Local History, founded by W.G. Hoskins and still the only university department devoted to the comparative study of local history across England at large. University policy demands that he publishes some of his work on Devon in national publications: the *Economic History Review*, *Rural History* and the Cambridge *Agrarian History of England and Wales vol.3, 1348-1500*. He has also published in *The Devon Historian*, *Devon and Cornwall Notes and Queries*, the *Transactions of the Devonshire Association* and *Devon Archaeological Society Proceedings*. Harold Fox's current Devon researches are into the origin of fishing villages and the exploitation of Dartmoor before and after the Norman Conquest, both to be published as monographs in the Department of English Local History's Occasional Papers series. He also works on Cornwall (an edition of rents and surveys of the Arundell family is to be published by the Devon and Cornwall Record Society in 1998), on Somerset, especially the estates of Glastonbury Abbey, and on the Midlands of England. His favourite teaching at Leicester is on Devon landscape history, with an associated week-long field-course on which Midlands students never fail to be amazed at intriguing and instructive features to be found tucked away in remote parts of the county. He is also an expert on the landscapes on either side of the M5 and of the Birmingham-Exeter railway, well-worn routes taking him to visit record offices, family and friends in Devon.

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