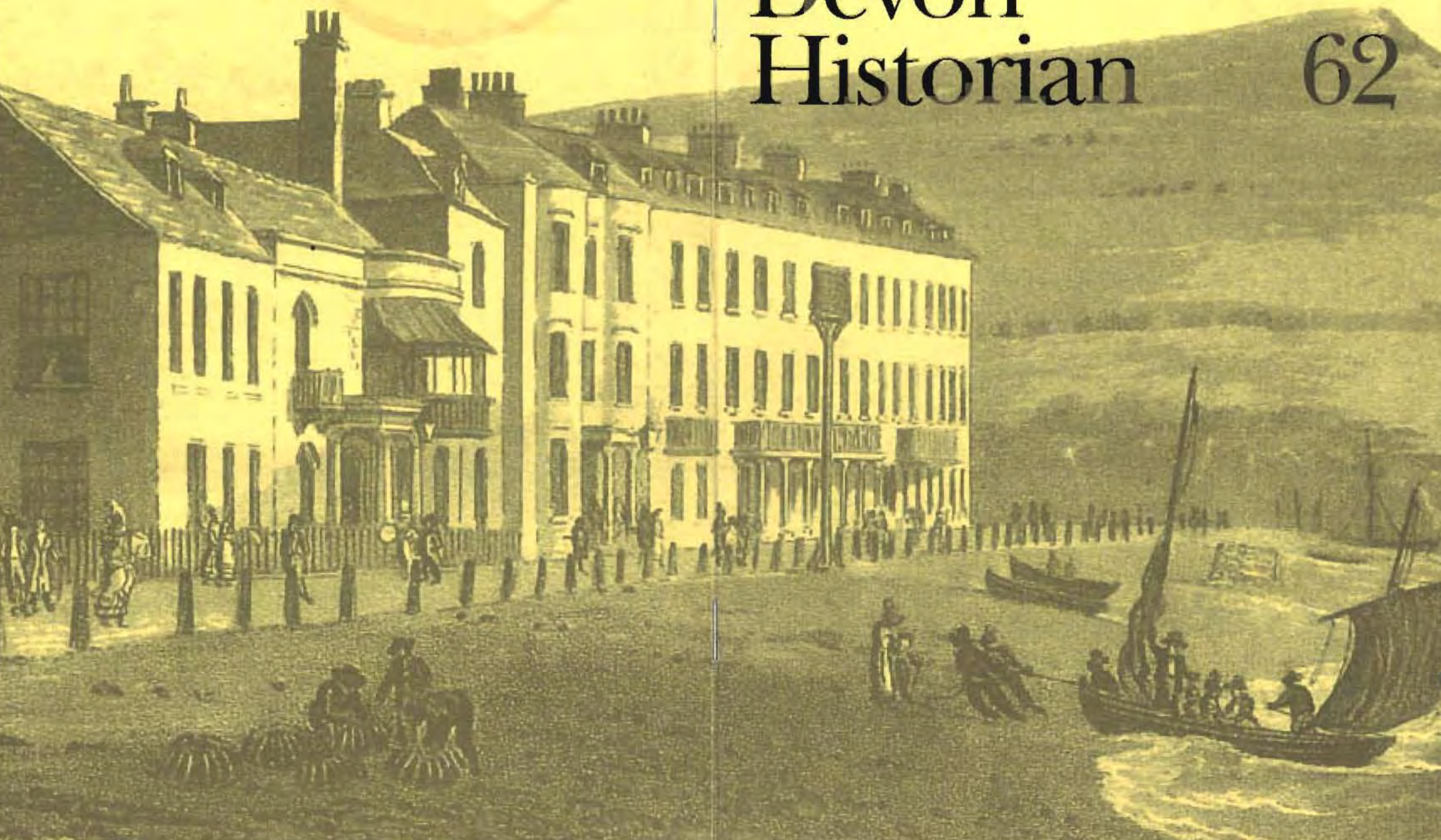


The Devon Historian

April 2001

62



THE DEVON HISTORY SOCIETY

Past Presidents

Professor W.G. Hoskins (1969-73); Lady Aileen Fox (1973-5);
Dr C.A. Raleigh Radford (1975-7); W. Best Harris (1977-81); Frank Booker (1981-2)
Professor Joyce Youings (1982-6); Crispin Gill (1986-9); Professor Ivan Roots (1989-93)
Dr Basil Greenhill (1993-96); Dr Harold Fox (1996-99)

OFFICERS

PRESIDENT	Dr W.B. Stephens
CHAIRMAN	Adrian Reed
VICE-CHAIRMAN	John Pike
HON. SECRETARY	David Thomas
HON. TREASURER	Dr Sadra Bhanji
HON. EDITOR	Mrs Helen Harris
COUNCIL	Brian Clist, Tony Collings, Dr Todd Gray, John Leach, Ian Maxted, Miss Elizabeth Maycock, Robin Stanes, Co-opted: Professor Joyce Youings, Mrs Sheila Stirling

MEMBERSHIP

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

SUBSCRIPTIONS

The Devon Historian is available free to all members of The Devon History Society. Membership subscriptions run annually from 1 May to 30 April and for the coming year will be as follows: Individual: £10.00; Family (that is two or more individuals in one family): £15.00; Corporate (libraries, institutions): £15.00; Affiliated societies: £10.00; Life Membership (open to individuals only): £100.00. Please send subscriptions to the Treasurer, Dr Sadra Bhanji, 13 Elm Grove Road, Topsham, Devon EX3 0EQ.

THE DEVON HISTORIAN

Correspondence relating to *The Devon Historian* and contributions for publication should be sent to Mrs Helen Harris, Hon. Editor, *The Devon Historian*, Hirondelles, 22 Churchill Road, Whitechurch, Tavistock PL19 9BU. The deadline for the next issue is 1 July 2001. Books for review should be sent to Mr David Thomas, 112 Topsham Road, Exeter EX2 4RW, who will invite the services of a reviewer. It is not the policy of the Society to receive unsolicited reviews.

DEVON HISTORY SOCIETY CONFERENCES

The Society will meet at Sidmouth on 24 March and at Great Torrington on 7 July. The AGM will be held at Exeter on 27 October.

The print on the cover is *The Royal Bath, York Hotel, Sidmouth*. Published 20 June 1820 by John Wallis at The Royal Marine Library (Somers Cocks 2483).

CONTENTS No. 62

April 2001

Notices	2
Rora, of the Manor of Hsington	BILL RANSOM3
Joseph and William Wimpcy, elusive Manorial lords?	RICHARD BASS11
A Hamoaze disaster reported	ANTHONY GREENSTREET18
Common fields enclosed and regretted; a seventeenth century argument among north Devon farmers	SARAH CHILD22
The Fenny Bridges memorial	ROBIN STANES26
The Eddystone lighthouse	AUDREY DEACON30
Reviews:	
The Chronicles of Dartmouth, by Don Collinson (A. Robertson)32
Take the children, by Alan Brown (W.B. Stephens)33
East Devon: the Travellers' Tales, ed. Todd Gray (D.L.B. Thomas)34
Exeter engraved Vol One, by Todd Gray (Ivan Roots)35
Whitchurch Down, ed. Helen Harris (D.L.B. Thomas)36
Devon History News 37
AGM Minutes 39

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 Mr David Thomas, 112 Topsham Road, Exeter, EX2 4RW. All issues are priced at £3, post free to members. Also available post free are *Index to The Devon Historian* (for issues 1-15, 16-30 and 31-45), and *Devon Bibliography 1980* (i.e. No 22 of *DH*, which was entirely devoted to our first *Bibliography*), 1981, 1982, 1983 and 1984, all £1 each. Bibliographies for more recent years are available from Devon Library Services.

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

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 2001, etc.

DEVON HISTORY SOCIETY LOGO

Two entries were received for the logo competition announced in *Devon Historian 61*. The logo that received the greatest number of votes at the Annual General Meeting was entered by a member who wishes to remain anonymous. His logo will be incorporated into the Society's stationery early in 2001.

RORA, OF THE MANOR OF ILSINGTON

Bill Ransom

Rora, together with Court Barton, comprised the demesne and barton lands of Ilsington manor. The latter has been examined in an earlier paper.¹ The first known reference to *Rora* was in Pipe Roll 14 of Henry III when:-

Ricardus de la Hore debet dim.m.pro codem,(Richard of Rora owed half a mark for the same :this referred to an earlier word 'plegio',pledge)²

Hore is thought to derive from the word 'ore' or 'ora' meaning a boundary and it is worthwhile to digress briefly as to which boundary that might be³. Possibly it might be that of one Peadingtun noted on a strip of parchment and headed 'Peading tunc land-score thaer Aescburne utscyt, that is "This is Peadingtun's land boundary at the Ashburn outfall"⁴. The original document of which the parchment may be a copy is judged to have been completed in the first half of the eleventh century. The boundary is a long one touching in its southern portion upon the boundaries of what are now the parishes of Ilsington, Bickington, Ogwell, Woodland and Ashburton. Much is obscure with references to such scarcely identifiable points as 'longstone, hive-tree and seven stones. There is general agreement, however, that the boundary starts where the river Ashburn falls into the Dart near Buckfast Bridge.⁵

In 1494 an indenture was made, in Latin, between John, Lord Dynham and Joan Northway.⁶ The translation of the first portion reads:-

Let all present and those in the future know that I John Dynham Lord of Dynham, knight have given conceded and by this my present indentured charter confirmed to Joan Northway and to John her son and Joan his wife and John the son of those same John and Joan all my messuage lands and tenements with appurtenances at Le Rore in my manor of Ilsington which the said Joan Northway held the same earlier to have and to hold all the aforesaid messuage lands and tenements with appurtenances to the aforesaid Joan and John her son and Joan his wife and John the son of those same John and Joan for the term of their life and of the one of them shall live the longest.

Interestingly we see that Joan Northway had held *Rora* before that date. The indenture goes on to show that the rent was to be 40s a year and the tenants were to pay suit at Lord Dynham's court and that of his heirs twice a year. As with Court Barton in Ilsington rights of haybote, firebote and foldbote were granted i.e. the use of wood for fuel and for the maintenance of farming structures.⁷ A fee of 100s was also to be paid. It will be of interest later to note that one of the witnesses to this indenture was a Thomas Hexte and that the lease was for three lives an example of the practice which, in Devon, probably arose in the latter part of the fifteenth century.

Chronologically, the next known document relating to *Rora* is that of the survey undertaken in 1566 for Henry Compton who had acquired part of Lord Dynham's lands following the death of the latter in 1501.⁸ One important section of this document deals with the demesne and barton lands of Ilsington manor and given below is a translation of the text relating to *Rora*.

John Northway holds for the term of his life by indenture given under the seal of John Dynham, Lord Dynham on the morrow of All Saints in the 10th year of Henry VII all messuages, lands and holdings with appurtenances at Lez Rore in the manor of Islington and their belongs to the said holdings etc. 1 dwelling house in which he lives and another farmhouse; 1 orchard; 1 garden $\frac{1}{2}$ acre; close Culver Park 4 acres; close New Park 3 acres; close the Wood Park acres; close Higher Lange Land 2 $\frac{1}{2}$ acres; close Lower Lange Land 3 acres; close Buttor 5 acres; close Gillhill Park 4 acres; close the Manno Park 4 acres; 2 closes Higher Marshes lying together 6 acres; close Lower Marsh 6 acres; close the mead next the garden 1 acre; meadow close Longmead 2 acres; 1 small meadow $\frac{1}{2}$ acre; close Little Park $\frac{1}{2}$ acre; waste Bower Down and the wood in which is growing oak etc. containing in all with 20 acres of wood 40 acres and pays per annum with suit 40s.

The entry clearly refers to the 1494 indenture and the rental is the same at 40s. There is in the margin in a different hand the statement:-

Reversion granted to Alexander his son and to Richard son of the said Alexander and Agnes wife of the said Richard for a term of 90 years by indenture if they so long live for a fine of £29.

Rora is given in the plural in the 1566 document but in the singular in that of 1494 and examination of the original Latin texts confirms this. It will be seen later that Rora was, indeed, divided. The John referred to in the 1566 survey would seem to be the grandson of Joan Northway (junior), of the 1494 lease.

In a deed of 2 February 1568 George Ford, shown in the 1566 survey as possessed of half the manor of Islington, mortgaged to Leonard Miller also of Islington, half of 'Roner or Ronara' and half a dovehouse belonging to it in the tenure of John Northway and Alexander Northway.⁹

On 2 November 1593 another lease was effected between John Arundell of Lanherne and his wife Anne of the one part and John Northway yeoman of Islington of the second part.¹⁰ The Arundells leased their portion of Rora, stated to be one quarter, for a term of 90 years but again on three lives that of John, and his son and daughter Thomas and Margaret, if they should live so long. The rent was to be 10s a year, (one quarter of the earlier rental of 40s). The significance of the quarter portion is that when Lord Dynham died all his estates, including that of Islington, were to be divided equally between his four sisters or their heirs. His third sister Katherine married Sir Thomas Arundell and clearly this quarter portion was still in the Arundell hands. The entry fee was £40 and presumably also a quarter of the full amount. The lease referred to a dovehouse and to Rora wood in addition to more general references to such items as gardens, orchards, moors and commons. On the death of John Northway the fourth part of a best beast should be paid as heriot or 16s 8d in lieu thereof.

In 1609 a survey roll of lands in Devon of John Arundell of Lanherne showed John Northway aged 45 as holding a quarter part of Rora with Thomas his son (18) and Margaret his daughter (20) at a rent still of 10s, a fee of £40 and heriot of a quarter of a best beast or 16s in lieu.¹¹

On 28 November 1622 Johan Northway married William Bickford. Johan may have been she who, baptised on 8 June 1601, was shown as daughter of John. This probably signalled the introduction of Bickford to Rora, for a son, John, baptised on 17 August

1623, is shown in the parish registers as the son of William Bickford de Rowra.¹²

In 1630 a Church Rate list shows John Northway of Rora paying 3s 4d, Thomas Northway and William Bickford each paying 12d.¹³ Clearly John had the major part of Rora which was divided into three parts. He is probably that John de Rowra baptised on 10 December 1563 and buried on 7 June 1643. An Agnes, widow 'de Rowra', was buried on 28 July 1647. The last specific mention found associating a Northway with Rora was in a document dated 1 July 1663 which stated:-

By indenture therein reciting that Thomas Northway did as of Easter Term before the date of this Deed suffer a common recovery of one messuage, one loft, 107 acres of land and 21 acres of meadow in Islington Gillhill and Rora.¹⁴

The only Thomas Northway shown in the parish registers to have died after this date was buried on 31 January 1663, (in the seventeenth century a new year started on 25 March).

There was then a gap in knowledge until 1722. An indenture of 13 March 1741 between Emanuel Hole and Sarah Bryant assignee of the estate of Sampson Hele, linen draper, refers to indentures of lease and release dated 1 and 2 July 1722. This latter indenture apparently relates to an assignment by Sampson Hele and his wife Elizabeth to Thomas Baker and his heirs of

all that moiety of one undivided messuage and tenement with the appurtenances in Rora and one dovehouse and all that wood commonly called Rora Wood...then or late in the tenure of Peter Bastow alias Cooke.¹⁵

Nothing further has been found until 1780 when the Land Tax Assessment (LTA) records show Mr Filmore as proprietor and Philip Raby as tenant.¹⁶

It is now necessary to turn back briefly to the 1566 survey for Henry Compton of his holdings in the manor of Islington. The background to this survey and the subsequent descent and dispersion of lands in Islington has been comprehensively reported elsewhere.¹⁷ Suffice it to summarise that half of the manor, which included Rora, was then held by George Ford, one quarter by the Arundell family and one quarter by Compton. By 1692 John Egerton, a son-in-law of Sir Henry Ford, the latter the great-grandson of George, was left, *inter alia*, and following arbitration in a dispute over Sir Henry's will, 'half of Rora'. The award does not say who owned the other half. Maybe it was that held by Sampson Hele some thirty years later but if so we do not know from whom Hele obtained it. Here is an unresolved issue which is likely so to remain.

John Egerton left his part of Islington manor to his son John, rector of East Allington, who, in 1730, devised it to Egerton Filmore of Lympstone: he is the Mr. Filmore of the 1780 LTA records.

Egerton Filmore died in November 1788 and left two daughters as co-heiresses, Sarah and Elizabeth, but Elizabeth soon became sole heiress as her sister died in the following January. She is shown as both owner and occupier of Rora in 1790. From 1791 to 1795 she was still the owner with William Rowell as occupier. After her marriage to John Searle in 1795 the latter became owner again with Rowell as occupier. John died in 1808 and Elizabeth in 1809. In her will dated 31 October 1808 she devised to her cousin Abraham Filmore:¹⁸

a farm called Rora in Islington now in the possession of William Rowell paying

thereout to John Filmore Kingston, nephew of the said Abraham £100.

Rora Wood was left to her cousin Emlin Filmore.

The LTA records and the Electoral Registers show Abraham to be the owner of Rora farm until 1838 in which year he was succeeded by Lewis Filmore of Stoke Damarel. Abraham married Sarah Ann Hill of Topsham on 28 March 1808.¹⁹ Sarah died in 1860 aged 83 described as the widow of Abraham Filmore of Hsington and Devonport.²⁰ she would thus have been 31 years old on marriage. Lewis was their son christened at St. Mary Magdalene, Bermondsey, London on 13 December 1815.²¹ He married Theodosia Boyd, only daughter of Henry Clare of Notting Hill and Worth, Sussex on 8 November 1859 and died on 27 May 1890.²²

Lewis is shown in the schedule accompanying the tithe map of Hsington for 1838 as the owner of 191 acres and 34 perches of Rora farm with John Mortimore as the occupier.

On 20 May 1829 Emlin Filmore mortgaged Rora Wood to Sibella Hext, widow, and James Hext of Staverton for £1200.²³ The conveyance gave Emlin Filmore the right to repay the sum borrowed and accrued interest at any time she so wished. Sibella and James acted as trustees for the son and daughters of Sibella. James still owned the wood in 1838 when its extent was given as 62 acres, 3 roods and 38 perches.

Rora wood had a complicated mortgage history following this conveyance of 1829. Thus on 23 June 1838 it was included in properties assigned to Francis Cornish Newman of Sloane St. London and Charles Kitson of Ashburton;²⁴ on 30 May 1839 Emlin Filmore then of Cheshunt in Hertfordshire and others conveyed it to James Hext and Thomas Hext of Staverton;²⁵ on 16 October 1847 James and Thomas Hext mortgaged it to Robert Tucker in trust for Edward Husson of Ashburton.²⁶ Finally on 22 December 1866 Lewis Filmore then of Brompton in Middlesex acquired 'all that woodland, coppice....known as Rora Wood estimated at 64 acres'.²⁷ So at that date the Rora estate, including the farmhouse and wood, was back in the ownership of the Filmore family.

In the previous year Lewis Filmore, then of Victoria St., Westminster, agreed to pay Samuel Sercombe, a builder of Newton Abbot, £180 for altering 'a house at Rora'.²⁸ It is reasonable to suppose that this was a precursor to his intention to recover and improve the Rora estate. (Just over a century earlier a Grace Filmore married Isaac Sercombe on 27 November 1762 at Exeter St. Paul - an early family relationship). Upon the death of Lewis Filmore, 27 May 1890, the estate passed to the surviving family, namely Theodosia Boyd Filmore, her sons Lewis Egerton and Henry Clare and her daughters Lucy Hill Carol Otway, Theodosia Catherine and Alice Boyd Bowers. Henry and Lucy died in 1910 and 1920 respectively. Lewis Egerton made a declaration concerning the ownership of Rora farm in 1921, (see reference 22), the conveyance of which had been lost ending with the statement:-

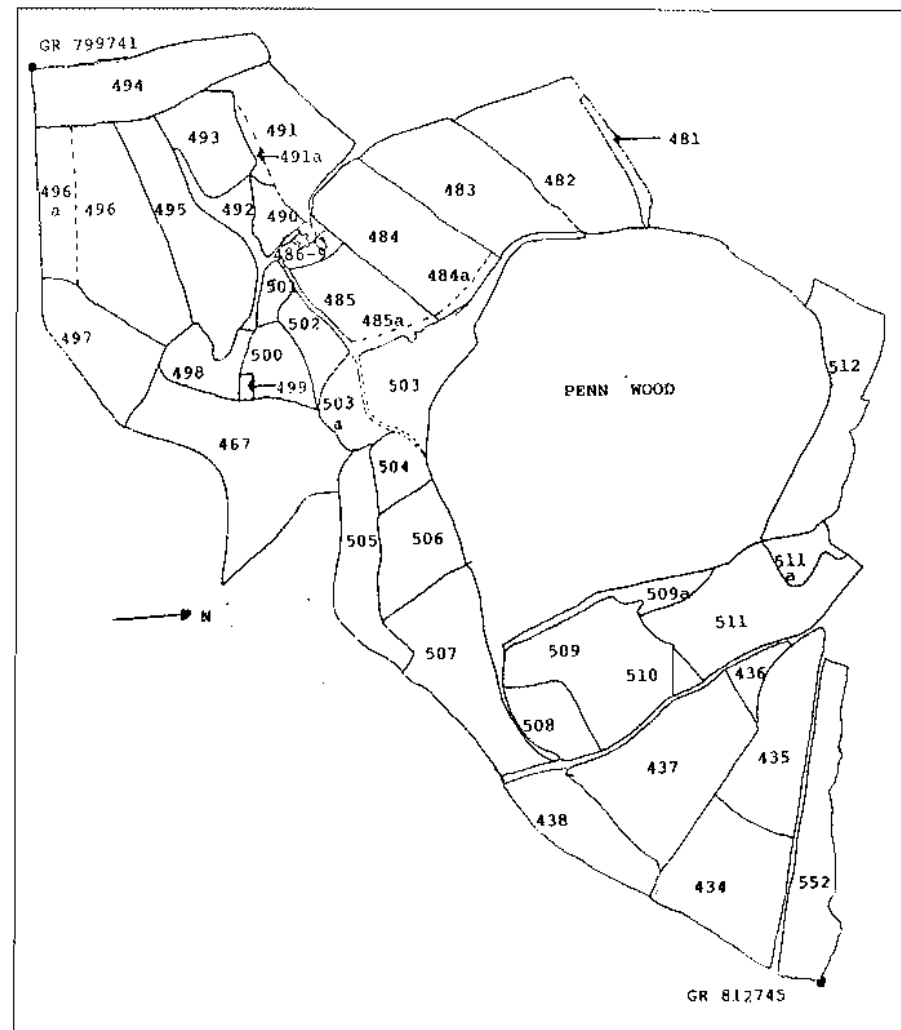
my father the said Lewis Filmore was at the date of his death seised of both Rora Farm and Rora Wood free from incumbrances and that the same property has been in the possession of our family ever since and that no adverse claim has been made thereto by any person whomsoever.

The Rora estate was conveyed to Raleigh Buller Phillpotts of Bridge House, Bovey Tracey by indenture dated 13 June 1921²⁹, a few days before this declaration.

Raleigh Buller Phillpotts was descended from Henry Phillpotts, Bishop of Exeter, and then through his son William, archdeacon of Cornwall. The archdeacon married into

the Devon family of Buller the most famous member of which was General Sir Redvers Buller V.C. Raleigh was born on 22 October 1871 the only son of a barrister William Francis Phillpotts and Gertrude Caroline Buller of Strete Raleigh, Whimble. Raleigh married Jean youngest daughter of Alan Stewart, Kinloch, Rannoch in 1898 was called to the bar in 1894, retired from practice in 1920 and was created a knight in 1946.³⁰ He died at Rora house in October 1960 leaving two sons and a daughter. His widow, Jean, died in 1965 but some five years before had moved with her son Alan, to nearby Lenda. Rora farm was sold to Peter Ayliffe of Bickington in 1960 and then to Mr and Mrs McIlroy in 1961.³¹ Mrs McIlroy continues to reside there: her husband died in 1998.

Fig 1. Rora, 1838. Schedule Nos. 477, 478, 479, 479a (Rora Down and Wood lie off the map to the west of Penn Wood).



Rora House also passed from the Phillpotts around 1960 firstly to Mr and Mrs Bradford and then to Malcolm Ford who purchased it in 1968 from Mrs Bradford, her husband having died in 1966. From 1970 to the present Rora House became the headquarters of the Rora Christian Fellowship Trust.³²

For much of the time Rora farm and house were occupied by tenants and the long tenancy of the Northways has been noted already. It is beyond the scope of this article to list all the known tenants which can, in the main, be found by reference to electoral registers, censuses and directories.

Figure 1 and the accompanying table show the Rora entry in the tithe survey of 1838.

Field No.	Name	Type of land	Size		
			a	r	p
434	Little or Lower Brake	A	4	2	12
435	Drews Marsh	A	3	2	2
436	" "	W	0	2	12
437	Great or Square Brake	A	5	2	13
438	Jewell's Marsh	A	2	2	14
467	Gillwell	A	6	0	26
477	Rora Down	Down	44	1	32
478	" "	"	33	2	20
481	Woody Park	W	0	2	17
482	" "	A	4	3	16
483	Middle Park	A	4	3	32
484	Colly Park	A	4	2	10
484a	" "	C	0	1	8
485	Higher Meadow	Pasture	3	0	6
485a	" "	C	0	0	38
486	Rora House	Homestead	0	1	32
487	Garden	Garden	0	0	31
488	New Plot	New Plot	0	1	13
489	House and Road	House etc.	0	2	36
490	Higher Orchard	Orchard	0	3	5
491	Ley Piece	A	4	2	4
491a	" "	W	0	1	4
492	Round Close	W	0	3	10
493	" "	A	2	0	8
494	Longland	A	4	1	6
495	Long Close	A	4	0	22
496	Buttons	C	5	3	22
496a	" "	A	1	3	0
497	Well Park	A	3	0	24
498	" "	C	1	1	26
499	Plot	C	0	0	17
500	Mead Plot	C	1	1	35
501	Lower Orchard	Orchard	0	2	4
502	Lower Meadow	Pasture	1	2	34

503	Nap Coppice & Waste	C & W	3	3	4
503a	" " "	Wood	1	0	16
504	Manna Park	Orchard	1	0	8
505	" "	A	2	1	16
506	Manna Park Moor	Rough Pasture	2	1	37
507	" " "	"	4	2	31
508	White Ash	Alders etc.	1	1	22
509	" "	A	5	0	10
509a	" "	C	1	0	8
510	North Marsh	C	0	1	6
511	" "	A	4	3	20
511a	" "	C	0	3	29
512	Marley or Old Leys	Timber etc.	4	1	24
552	Long Meadow	A	3	2	32
479	Rora Wood	C	44	3	2
479a	" "	Furze,Heath	18	0	36
Total			254	0	32

A = Arable C = Coppice W = Waste

The sizes are in acres, roods and poles with 40 poles to the rood and 4 roods to the acre.

Notes and References

CRO = Cornwall Record Office

DRO = Devon Record Office

1. Ransom, B, 'The Court Barton of the Manor of Ilsington', *Devon Historian*, 60, pp 19-25, 2000.
2. Pipe Roll Society, Pipe Roll 14 Henry III, New Series, 4, 1927.
3. Gover, J.E.B., Mawer, A., Stenton, F.M., *The Place Names of Devon*, English Place Name Society, 9, p.477, Cambridge University Press, 1932.
4. Davidson, J.B., 'Some Anglo-Saxon Boundaries' *Transactions Devonshire Association*, 8, p.390, 1876.
5. As for reference 3 but page 462.
6. CRO, Lease for Three Lives of Lands in Ilsington, AR1 632, 2 November 1494.
7. As for reference 1.
8. DRO, Survey of Lord Dynham's Lands, Z 17/3/19, 1566.
9. DRO, Calendar of Enrolled Deeds, No.831, Roll 22, Membrane 13d, 2 February, 1568.
10. CRO, Lease of Lands called Rowra, AR4/2074, 2 November 1593.
11. CRO, Survey Roll of the Lands in Devon of John Arundell of Lanherne, AR2/1393, 9 August 1609.
12. Devon and Cornwall Record Society, Ilsington Parish Registers.
13. Church Rate List, 1630. Communication Mr R.N.Wills. See also Fursdon, C.A., *Devon Parishes Church Rates*, 3, p. 105, undated.
14. Photocopy of an abstract of Sarah Bryant's Title to Gillhill and Killa. The original

- DRO reference cannot now be traced.
15. DRO, Indenture Between Emanuel Hole, Sarah Bryant etc. Box 32 53/6, 13 March 1741.
 16. Land Tax Assessment Records held on microfiche at the DRO.
 17. Ransom, B., 'The Descent and Dispersion of the Manor of Hsington', *Transactions Devonshire Association*, 131, pp. 105-121.
 18. DRO, Will of Elizabeth Searle, 2644 M add 2 F1.
 19. DRO, Topsham Parish Registers.
 20. *Gentleman's Magazine*, 1860, Part II, p.103.
 21. International Genealogical Index, England, A 1317
 22. DRO, Declaration of Lewis Egerton Filmore, 2644 M add 2 E7, 17 June 1921.
 23. DRO, Mortgage of Rora Wood, 2644 M add 2 T22, 20 May 1829.
 24. DRO, Assignment of Properties to Newman and Kitson, 2644 M add 2 T23, 23 June 1838.
 25. DRO, Conveyance of Rora Wood to James and Thomas Hext, 2644 M add 2 T25, 31 May 1839.
 26. DRO, Mortgage in Trust of Rora Wood, 2644 M add 2 T26, 16 October 1847.
 27. DRO, Conveyance of Rora Wood to Lewis Filmore, 2644 M add 2 T27, 22 December 1866.
 28. DRO, Alterations to Rora House, 2644 M add 2 F2, 1865.
 29. DRO, Acknowledgement and Undertaking between Lewis Egerton Filmore and Raleigh Buller Phillpotts, 2644 M add 2 E8, 30 June 1921.
 30. Black, A. and C., *Who was Who*, 4, 1941-50. Adam and Charles Black, London.
 31. Personal Communication, Mrs Mellroy, March 2000.
 32. Personal Communication, Mr Malcolm Ford, April 2000.

Acknowledgements

I wish firstly to acknowledge the generous help from Mr R.N.Wills of Narracombe Farm, Hsington who placed for my use much information gathered over many years. My thanks also to Valerie Ransom for some of the Latin transcriptions, to Mrs Mellroy, Mr Malcolm Ford, and the staff at the Devon Record Office and the Westcountry Studies Library.

JOSEPH AND WILLIAM WIMPEY. ELUSIVE MANORIAL LORDS?

Richard Bass

What is the connection between His Grace the Duke of Beaufort, Joseph Wimpey of Christchurch, Hampshire, and Culmpit in Bratton Clovelly? The answer is to be found in a manuscript book which I came across recently, entitled *The Manor and Borough of Chulmleigh In Devonshire, 1711*.¹ This survey, commissioned by the Duke of Beaufort, then Lord of the Manor, is bound in parchment, 12½ in x 7½ in, and has in it 39 double pages listing the names of tenants of three out of the five prebends and the extent and value of their holdings, written in a beautiful copperplate hand, and is the partner of the Map of Prebend Lands which the duke had made at the same time, now in the Devon Record Office.² The survey is an intriguing record of early eighteenth century Chulmleigh and awaits detailed research. These three prebends in the final 'Collection of the whole Mannor' on p. 39, were assessed at the astonishing sum of £10,378 16s 3d and the 'Worth per Annum If in hand' at £1,227 9s 6d.

As well as the survey for which the book was intended, there are at the back, written in a different hand, two double pages headed 'Survey of the Manor of Chulmleigh at 23 years Purchase 11th March 1767'. This is a copy of the first two of six double pages of a survey made by Silas Blandford for the Duke of Beaufort,³ preparatory to the disposal of outlying estates after the death of the 4th duke. It has at its end a long NB recommending sale by auction in lots, which Silas thought would increase the selling price by £4,000 above his estimate for the manor of £28,031.13s 0d. This advice seems not to have been taken as the manor was sold to Joseph Wimpey for £17,500.⁴ Previously all that was commonly known of Beaufort's successor was Lysons' naming him Wimpey, without even a Christian name or initial.⁵ That he became Lord of the Manor between 1767 and 1769 is confirmed by Presentments of Jury at the Chulmleigh Manor Court which survive in the South Molton Museum and the North Devon Record Office⁶ which also give his christian name, Joseph.

This 1767 Survey is not the only alien material in the book, immediately following the valuation of the three Chulmleigh prebends there are 39 double pages (an odd coincidence in number) of household accounts dating from 1783-1795, which have no title page nor statement of whose the household was, nor any other obvious key to their origin. It is with these pages that this article is chiefly concerned.

The book had been in the possession of the local auctioneers, Hannaford and Southcombe, of New Street, Chulmleigh.⁷ They had acquired it, no doubt, through acting for years as rent collectors for the rectors of Chulmleigh, who were all members of the Hole family from 1772 to 1894. In 1772 the Duke of Beaufort had sold the advowson of Chulmleigh Church for £2,500 to the Rev. Richard Hole, who was described in his obituary in the *Gentleman's Magazine* as a dispenser 'of private patronage only second to the Courtenays in Devon'.⁸ Richard Hole bought the prebends as they fell vacant and by 1776 had cornered them all, greatly enriching the rectory thereby. Some years after Hannaford and Southcombe had sold up in the 1970s, the proprietor of the Corner Shop next door bought what had been part of their offices, and discovered this book behind the safe, where it had fallen countless years before. Mrs Eileen Dolling,⁹ always interested in anything to do with Chulmleigh's history, fortunately heard that it was due to be sold, and being determined that it should not be lost to Chulmleigh, bought it

herself, thinking (rightly) that it was an important document relating to the Duke of Beaufort and his lordship of the Manor of Chulmleigh. She had no notion at the time that the pages of household accounts were unconnected with the Duke of Beaufort's survey. Eventually she showed me the book early in 1999.

Internal evidence from the household accounts shows that they are those of Joseph Wimpey, written in his own hand, and that he bought a farm, which is not named, on 30 November 1784, from 'Farmer Weakley per Mr Oake amount of Bill of Sale £195.7.0.' a payment which he followed on 12 January, 1785, 'Farmer Weakley in full for goods in Inventory £95.7.0.'. This is confirmed by the Winton Tithing List which names Joseph as the successor to Farmer Weakley in 1784/5 and reveals the name, and so the location, of the farm as Bockhampton, near Christchurch, (then) Dorset.¹⁰ Joseph was still listed as a Freeman of Christchurch in 1790.¹¹ His previous residence was called 'Boreham', from which he removed both property and garden plants and trees. There is no evidence of an estate of that name in the Christchurch area, though there is a Boreham in Warminster – but there is no trace of any Wimpey there. Is it just a coincidence that Joseph's banker, Bostock and Huddleston, is once called the 'County Bank at Warminster', and his widow went to live in Warminster when she married her new husband, James Anderson, LL.D. FRC?¹²

Indeed there is little firm evidence about Joseph before his arrival at Bockhampton. The Mormon Genealogical Index,¹³ however, notes the christening of a Joseph Wimpey on 1 October 1712, at Frome, which is confirmed in the Register of St John's Church, where a Joseph was christened on that day, son of Thomas and Elizabeth Whimpew. This is a possible date, since Joseph's son, William, died in 1814 at the age of 79.¹⁴ The Mormon Index also lists the marriage of a Joseph Wimpey 'ABT 1779. Of Bockhampton, Hampshire' (not recorded in the Christchurch Register). This must be our Joseph, though the date is five years earlier than one would have expected with regard to the purchase date of the farm. He must have bought the farm about the time of his second marriage when he was already in his seventies, and have been married first in the 1730s. Neither wife is ever named: the account book always has 'Mrs Wimpey' or 'my wife'.

Joseph is almost as shadowy a figure as his wife. One of the few recorded statements about him is in the local history 'bible' of the area, Herbert Druitt's *Christchurch Miscellany* containing a transcription (in the 1920s) of Queries and Answers relating to the Parish of Christchurch section of the Hampshire Repository, 1801:¹⁰

Have any experiments been made in agriculture? By whom? Of what nature? And with what success? Mr Whimpew, who has written a great deal on the subject of agriculture, made some experiments in the drill husbandry, but without success.

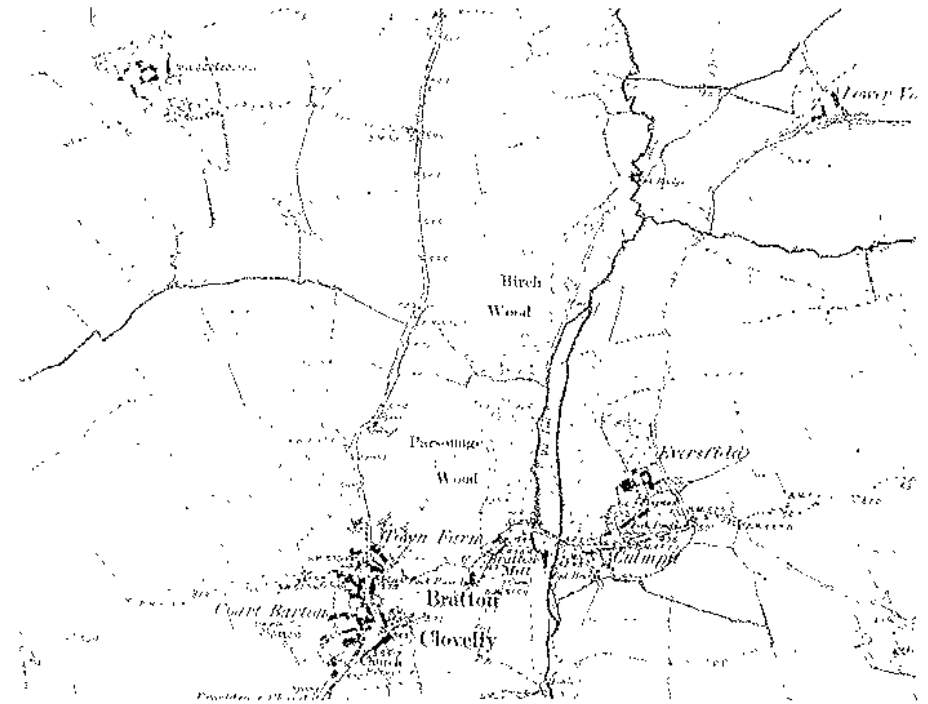
Of this 'great deal' the British Library lists, as well as a number of articles, one book which ran into a second edition, *Rural Improvements: or, Essays on the most rational methods of improving estates: accommodated to the soil, climate, and circumstances of England...* by a land-owner [i.e. J. Wimpey] London, J. Dodsley, 1775, pp. xvi, 528, xv, a substantial tome.¹⁵ Support for Druitt's mention of his experimenting with drill husbandry is to be found in the account book in large numbers of loads of ashes which he bought, and the purchase of a 'Barrel for Drill', (at 3/6). 'Beat Ashes' were the manure on which the cultivation of roots (drill husbandry) chiefly depended. 'Beat' is the rough sod of moorland or matted top growth of fallow land which was sliced off with what in

Devon was called a 'bidix' and burned. Joseph sold quantities of seeds – clover, turnip and cabbage, even turnip rooted cabbage. He also sold beans of various varieties. He planted thousands of trees, ash, beech, blackthorn and holly, but the only trees he sold were some Scotch firs and a few withies. His other sales seem hardly experimental: occasionally a calf, and in 1790, not long before he moved west, he specialised in pigs for roasting. Indeed, the list of his sales, which also included, annually, a load or two of wheat, oats and potatoes, etc., looks far more like the product of a small farm shop and market garden than an experimental farm. Purchases of 2 dozen, and later 4½ dozen, fossils can hardly have been for agricultural experiments. However, frequent entries of expenditure on letters and books all through the accounts possibly testify to serious intellectual interests of some sort.

After eight years at Bockhampton he moved down to Bratton Clovelly to join his son, sending part of the 'goods' by land, and part by sea via Morwellham, using Gill & Co. as his agent. This firm had the lease of Morwellham¹⁶ from the Duke of Bedford; as well as being carriers, shipping agents and wharfingers. They ran a bank at Tavistock, and offered facilities at the Quay through which Joseph transferred some money to his wife in 1795. The hardest part of the journey must have been from Morwellham to Bratton, by pack horse or sledge.

His son, William, is said by local tradition in Bratton to have lived at a house now called Eversfield Manor.¹⁷ (Culmpit in the Tithe Map of 1838), where Sabine Baring-Gould lived as a child. Lysons, writing in 1822¹⁸, says

The manor of Bratton....is now in litigation between the claimants of the



Map. Ord. Sur. County Series, 1st Ed., Sheet 75, S.E., 1883. W.S.L.

estates of the late William Wimpey, Esq.... the barton of Swaddledown [belongs] to the heirs of the late William Wimpey.

Earlier, in 1788, Swaddledown was advertised:¹⁹

...fee simple and inheritance of manor and Lordship of Manor of Bratton....large Barton or farm of more than 800 acres and 5 other small farms, etc....about 1000 acres in all....premises so near for lime dressing that one can go 2 or 3 times a day....

This must be when William Wimpey bought Swaddledown. It is attractive to imagine that the convenient 'lime dressing' was to be dug from Culmpit. However there can never have been lime there; it would probably have come from kilns on the Bosley-Bridestowe road. Although the distance is somewhat large, about a mile could be cut off by the pack horses using the bridle path which ran east from the end of the Swaddledown drive. Considerable doubt has arisen about the houses named Culmpit and Eversfield, created to a large degree by Sabine Baring-Gould's reminiscences and novels, but also by the fact that the road running east-west between Eversfield and Culmpit had not then been made, but ran around south of Culmpit, so that Eversfield/Culmpit was naturally a single estate.

There is also considerable argument about what the culm from the pits was. The answer must surely be that 'culn' is always connected, however remotely, with coal; in many parts of Devon, especially the north, there are or were, on the surface, pockets of impure anthracite, sometimes called 'brown coal', which would burn. The quite large hollows (marked fish ponds), now in Eversfield garden, may have been dug out in earlier times to provide heat in local houses or forges.

Culmpit was offered for sale in 1830²⁰ as a 'new built genteel family residence', and again in 1837²¹ as 'late abode of E. Baring Gould Esq....a modern built mansion house'. It was between 1830 and 1837 that it was let to the Baring Goulds. There has never been any house which could be described as a gentleman's residence on the south side of the present road, and this house was the one which was later named Eversfield. When was this 'new built' house constructed? I believe that it was built by William Wimpey about 1793. It was not unreasonable in 1830 to call it new built when it would naturally have been compared with other almost entirely older houses in Bratton. Five entries in the accounts between 19 June 1793 and 30 July 1795 describe payments to 'brick men', 'brick burners', 'brick makers' and 'brick layers'. It has always appeared to me, despite unanimous local opinion to the contrary, that the original front of Eversfield Manor, with its high cornice (behind the present bow windows which were added by the Mannings who bought the house in 1850) was built of rendered brickwork rather than rendered stonework. That the house *was* brick built has been confirmed by recent repairs (November 1999) in which many of the internal walls have been stripped. Itinerant builders were not uncommon in the period, using local timber and local clay and building their own temporary kilns, and this seems likely to be what happened here. Was there perhaps some burnable culm still in the pits?

I believe, then, that when in 1792 Joseph came to live with William in Bratton after he had sold the Manor of Chulmleigh to Sir Jacob Wolff,²² they both lived initially at Swaddledown, but that William built a new house at Culmpit for his father (and step-mother?) on the north side of the present road. When his father died in 1801, he let Swaddledown²³ and moved into the new house himself. It would have been much more

convenient, as well as being new, as Swaddledown is very isolated, about a mile from the village and down a lengthy drive. William, and his bailiff who lived in Bratton Mill, a mere stone's throw from Eversfield, have left curiously vivid memories behind them, which were still current in 1944, of having been men of somewhat ill-repute and prone together to indulge in women and drink, William certainly not being regarded as a gentleman. Poor William has no way of clearing his name, if indeed it deserves to be cleared.

William was buried at Bratton on 19 August 1814, aged 79.²⁴ After the accounts end in 1795 there is no more mention of Joseph: the last entry records the payment of one guinea to 'my wife'.

William left his estates in disarray – or his heirs ran through his estate with alarming rapidity. In 1820 the *Exeter Flying Post* announced:

To be peremptorily SOLD pursuant to a Decree of the High Court of Chancery
...on Wednesday the 13th day of September 1820 at the White Hart Inn at Okehampton

Several Eligible FREEHOLD ESTATES
and the
MANOR OF BRATTON CLOVELLY

...formerly the Freehold Estates and Manor of the late William Wimpey, Esq.

Particulars could be had from certain lawyers and from 'Mr Geo. Cocks, the Receiver at Bratton....'²⁵ In the September following 'the Estates and Manor of the late William Wimpey' were still for sale.²⁶ So, William, or more probably his heirs, had become bankrupt and the matter was still under dispute between his heirs when Lysons was collecting information about Bratton for his 1822 publication.

Wimpey father and son remain only shadowy characters. It would be interesting to know whether Joseph was the sort of person one would expect to succeed the Duke of Beaufort as Lord of a Manor as well as being a gentleman agriculturalist whose fame just happens to be lost to posterity, or whether, as seems more likely, he was a not very successful middle class farmer who was trying to climb in society. In either case it is hard to explain how he could have been capable of raising the £17,500 needed to pay the Duke of Beaufort for the Manor of Chulmleigh and yet have left so little trace of himself in the Christchurch area.

I was contemplating the Wimpeys' place in Bratton society when I recollected a talk given some years ago by archaeologist Simon Timms, who had spent some time at Bratton when the Roadford Reservoir was being built. He mentioned that Sir Elijah Impey, of Warren Hastings' fame, had lived in Bratton. Why then, I thought, had not Lysons mentioned so distinguished a man? I therefore consulted Sabine Baring Gould's *Early Reminiscences*²⁷ to see what he had to say about his childhood there in the 1830s, and was surprised to read:

My father took a house in Bratton Clovelly parish that had been built and occupied by Sir Elijah Impey, Chief Justice of Bengal, who died in 1809. He had left behind him an illegitimate son by a Bratton girl, who became my father's groom and called himself Wimpey....The house we inhabited had been a residence of the Phayre family or a branch of it.

Baring Gould was writing his reminiscences in 1922. His description of the position of the house and the view from it certainly describes Culmpit/Eversfield. It is clear that it was he who started the rumour that Sir Elijah Impey had lived there. Sir Elijah did have an illegitimate son²⁸, Archibald, but he had a distinguished career which never caused him to be hidden in darkest Devon, adopt the name of Wimpey or serve as a groom: in fact he was a King's Scholar at Westminster and an eminent lawyer, becoming a Bencher of the Inner Temple before he died in 1830, about the same time that Sabine's father leased Culmpit.

The general tenor of Baring Gould's remarks is such that it is obvious that his childhood recollections were much coloured by the famous names with which he thought, possibly correctly, that his family was then acquainted, like the Phayres and the Impeys. I do not think that there is much doubt that he had a very muddled recollection of Bratton and the comparatively insignificant Wimpeys, and added to it an imaginary story of the famous Impey. I suppose that there may just possibly be a strand of truth in the story about his father's groom. William Wimpey had a son and a daughter, Benjamin and Charlotte, who were both married²⁹ and may have fallen on hard times as a result of the legal wranglings of William's heirs. It is possible that Benjamin was a groom in 1830, but he certainly was not alias Archibald Impey.

In conclusion, the renaming of Culmpit/Eversfield is worth a mention. When Thomas Manning bought the Culmpit property about 1850, he renamed it Eversfield. A local tradition has it that the reason he did so was that his wife found 'Culmpit' a rather vulgar name and called it after a previous house. However, she installed stained glass windows in memory of a number of her relations in the church which she did so much to repair and 'restore', and it is more likely that she had the house named after her grandfather whose surname was Eversfield. His memorial window is on the north wall of the church.

Notes.

I would like to thank Robin Stanes for his encouragement, advice and help, particularly about matters agricultural.

1. The Manor of Chulmleigh was held by the Courtenays until 1539 when it was given to the Russells by Henry VIII. It passed by various marriages to the Duke of Beaufort. The Collegiate Church of St Mary Magdalene had been endowed with five Prebends, sometimes said to have been endowed by Athelstan.
2. Devon Record Office (DRO), 1591M/1.
3. Gloucestershire County Record Office (GCRO), D2700 PB2/3.
4. I am grateful to Mrs M. Richards, the Duke of Beaufort's Archivist for details of the sale and other matters not available in the GCRO and to His Grace for permission to mention them.
5. Lysons, *Magna Britannia*, Devon, 1822, p. 108.
6. North Devon Record Office, B136/51-59.
7. Hannaford and Southcombe were a flourishing firm of Valuers, Auctioneers and Estate Agents, who had a wide practice round Chulmleigh in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. I possess two of their nineteenth century Rent Collection Books for Prebend Lands.
8. *Gentleman's Magazine*, 1796, 1, 357.
9. Mrs Dolling has lived much of her life in Chulmleigh. She is an artist and at pres-

- ent Church Warden. She has agreed, with the help of a grant from the Chulmleigh & District History Society, to present the Survey Book to the Devon Record Office.
10. I am grateful to Ms S. Newman, Vice Chairman of Christchurch History Society, for this and much other information about the Christchurch area.
11. Hampshire Poll Book, 1790. Hampshire Record Office, 4M78/Z3/1.
12. I regret that I have mislaid the source of the information about Mrs Wimpey's second marriage and Joseph Wimpey's death.
13. Mormon Family Search, <http://www.familysearch.org/Search/searchresults>
14. DRO, St Mary the Virgin, Bratton Clovelly, Burial Register.
15. BL ref: 1651/1584. The BL lists other essays and articles by Joseph Wimpey: some published in Hunter A., *Georgical Essays* Vols 3 and 4, 1803, ref: 7077.dd.31. 32.; *An Essay on the high price of provision etc.* London, 1772, ref: 104.1.28, etc.
16. Information from Mr G. Emerson, Director, the Morwellham and Tamar Valley Trust.
17. I am grateful to Mrs M. Fletcher, of Bratton Mill, and Mrs S. David who lived at Eversfield Manor for 19 years until recently, for providing much of the local information.
18. Lysons, *op.cit.*, p. 66.
19. *Trewman's Exeter Flying Post (EFP)*, 21 Aug. 1788. Westcountry Studies Library (WSL).
20. *EFP*, 4 Mar. 1830.
21. *EFP*, 21 Sept. 1837.
22. Sir Jacob Wolff, Bt., Baron of the Holy Roman Empire, was son of Godfrey Wolff of Moscow who was created Baron by Emperor Francis I of Germany. Jacob was naturalised and created Baronet in 1766. His father-in-law was Dr Stephen Weston, Bishop of Exeter. *Extinct and Dormant Baronetcies*. Scott Webster. 1841.
23. *EFP*, 5 Feb. 1801, and again on 6 Mar. 1806.
24. DRO, Bratton Clovelly, Burial Register.
25. *EFP*, 10 Aug. 1820.
26. *EFP*, 13 Sep. 1821.
27. *Early Reminiscences 1834-1864*, S. Baring Gould, Bodley Head, 1923, p.4.
28. DNB. Sir Elijah Impey.
29. DRO, Bratton Clovelly, Registers.

With reference to maps:

The bridle path for lime for Swaddledown continued east from the drive (B.M. 590.0) to the Boasley-Bridestowe road.

The road down the hill between Eversfield and Culmpit had not been made in the Wimpey's time, but followed the track between the i and the t of Culmpit.

Richard Bass retired to Chulmleigh, from teaching at Winchester College, in 1980. Besides being involved in many parish activities and in Church work he is currently Chairman of Chulmleigh Local History Society.

A HAMOAZE DISASTER REPORTED

Anthony Greenstreet

Two hundred years ago disaster sensations were much less commonplace than they are today, and the means of reporting them were infinitely scantier. Occasionally, however, a disaster occurred that gripped the imagination and attention of the press and public, and Plymouth was the scene of one such.

At 4.30pm on 22 September 1796 Plymouth was shaken by a tremendous explosion: the frigate *Amphion*, 32 guns, had blown up in the Hamoaze. The *Naval Chronicle* (1800) published an account of the disaster by 'H' entitled 'A more authentic Account, than has yet been published, of the Loss of His Majesty's Ship Amphion, ... Communicated by a Correspondent, who was at Plymouth when the dreadful Event took place'. (In fact 'H's' account follows almost exactly the text of the booklet published by Thomas Tegg, 111 Cheapside, London in about 1796 under the title of *Dreadful explosion of His Majesty's Frigate Amphion ... Including the Melancholy Consequences and Remarkable Preservation of the Captain, Boatswain, and a few Others, As communicated by one of the Survivors*).

'H's' correspondent reported that he 'felt while at Stonehouse, a violent shock like an earthquake; which extended as far off as the Royal Hospital, and the town of Plymouth. The sky towards Dock appeared red, like the effect of a fire: for near quarter of an hour no one could discover what was the reason; though the streets were crowded with people running different ways in the greatest consternation'.

Amphion was under orders to join a frigate squadron commanded by Sir Edward Pellew (1757-1833; later first Viscount Exmouth), but had put into Plymouth on 19 September for repairs to her foremast. She was due to sail on 23 September under the command of Edward Pellew's younger brother Israel (1758-1832; later also knighted and an admiral). Thus, when the ship blew up she had aboard a full crew of about 250, and (the ship having been manned originally from Plymouth) about a hundred relatives and friends who had come to say goodbye. According to the brief report in *The Sherborne Mercury* of 26 September 1796 – the first published account of the disaster – only some 37 men and 2 women, most of them seriously injured, survived. The *Gentleman's Magazine* of October picked up, and elaborated upon, that report and so spread the news to its substantial number of subscribers throughout the country.

A midshipman aboard the guardship *Cambridge* lying nearby had his telescope trained on *Amphion* as she took in her bowsprit while lashed alongside a sheer-hulk within a few yards of the Dockyard jetty. He saw *Amphion* suddenly appear 'to rise altogether upright from the surface of the water, until he nearly saw her keel – the explosion then succeeded: the masts seemed to be forced into the air, and the hull instantly to sink – all this passed before him in the space of two minutes'. Another eyewitness standing on the Dockyard Stairs said 'that the first he heard of it was a kind of hissing noise; and then the explosion, when he beheld the masts blown up into the air'. Other observers saw (as portrayed in a dramatic print in T. Tegg's booklet) several bodies and wreckage thrown as high as the ship's main top-gallant masthead. The explosion ripped 'the upper works in the fore part of the ship to atoms, and she almost immediately sank in ten fathoms of water'. Curiously, while the explosion shook windows in Stonehouse and was felt in Plymouth it caused little damage on shore, or to the old receiving ship *Yarmouth* lying close by, or to the sheer-hulk lashed alongside – even

though four of *Amphion's* twelve-pounder guns were thrown down onto the hulk's deck.

All published accounts dwelt ghoulishly on the scenes of 'indescribable horror' resulting from the explosion: (as the *Sherborne Mercury* put it, 'such a dreadful scene as the humane mind cannot dwell upon but with the utmost horror'). Sir Richard King, Port Admiral, was giving a public dinner in honour of the coronation of Britain's ally, Czar Paul I of Russia, when it occurred. He immediately went in his boat to board the hulk 'where the sight he beheld was dreadful: the deck covered with blood, mangled limbs and entrails, blackened with gunpowder; the shreds of *Amphion's* pendant and rigging, hanging about her, and pieces of her shattered timber strewed all around'. The few survivors were conveyed 'as fast as their mangled situation would permit, to the Royal Hospital; ... it is dreadful to relate what a scene took place – arms, legs, and lifeless trunks, mangled and disfigured by gunpowder were collected and deposited at the hospital, having been brought in sacks to be owned; ... men, women and children, flocking around the gates, and entreating admittance, whose sons, husbands and fathers, were amongst the unhappy number'. In the following weeks bodies washed out of the sunken ship's interior (where the great majority had died) 'were towed around by boats through Stonehouse Bridge up to the Royal Hospital Stairs, to be interred in their burying ground'. Among the otherwise unnamed civilian victims were 'Mr Spry, an auctioneer, who had long lived in great respectability at Dock, his son and godson, who had gone aboard to visit a friend. Among the naval victims was a lieutenant who 'was the only support of an aged mother and sister; who at his death had neither friend nor relation left to protect and comfort them'; and the 'numbers of people who afterwards were daily seen at the Dock in deep mourning for their lost relatives was truly melancholy'.

Some remarkable escapes were reported. A small child was found alive locked in the arms of the upper part of the body of a sailor's wife, and was 'likely to do well'. A few men working in the tops were thrown into the water and picked up very little hurt. The bosun, Mr Montandon, who from the cat-head had been supervising the rigging of the jib-boom, 'suddenly felt himself driven upwards and fell into the sea'; suffering only a broken arm, he was rescued by one of the many boats launched from nearby ships. A seaman trapped below decks cut a way out with a knife through the shattered gun-room companion, and swam to the surface. The sentinel at Captain Pellew's cabin door remembered only that he had been looking at his watch when the explosion happened and having it dashed out of his hands – but could not recall how he was brought on shore almost unharmed. Others were spared by lucky chance: Captain Rowley of the *Unité*, Captain Darby of the *Bellerophon* and Mr Swaffield of the Pay Office were all due to dine with Captain Pellew aboard the *Amphion*, but were detained by unexpected business. Less fortunate was Marine Lieutenant Campbell who was due to dine at the Marine Barracks, but returned temporarily to *Amphion* to collect some anxiously-awaited letters and was blown up with the ship.

Inside his cabin Pellew was entertaining to dinner his first lieutenant and other senior officers of *Amphion*: but the principal guest was his old mess-mate Captain William Swaffield of the *Overysse*, 64 guns, and brother of Pay Office Swaffield. The fate of this party attracted much interest. According to one account, as the officers were drinking their wine, Captain Pellew 'heard a kind of rumbling immediately preceding the blow-up, which alarmed him, and he instantly ran into the quarter gallery nearest the sheer-hulk, on whose deck he was instantly thrown, whereby he received a severe blow to one side of his head, and a contusion on the breast'. Another account has it that the explosion threw the officers from their seats against the deckhead and stunned them, but

that Pellew 'had presence of mind sufficient to fly to the cabin windows; and seeing two hawsers, one slack in the bit, and the other taut, threw himself with an amazing leap ... upon the latter', and so saved himself. A third account maintains that, after being thrown by the explosion against the deck-head, 'Captain Pellew exclaimed "The ship is blown up!" and sprang to the quarter gallery. Looking forward, he saw the fore-mast carried up into the air; next instant a black or spar struck him on the forehead and knocked him senseless into the water'. The first lieutenant (the only other survivor of the dinner) also escaped through the window and was rescued 'by being also a remarkable good swimmer'. According to one account Captain Swaffield's body was found a month later 'with his skull fractured, appearing to have been crushed between the sides of two vessels'. Another account has it that his body was later found with that of the servant who had been bringing a dish into the cabin when the explosion occurred: the servant's body 'hung in the cabin door, which had closed upon his coat, the body being within the cabin, and the coat pocket, with a book in it, outside'. Swaffield's body was taken for burial in 'Stonehouse chapel'. The scarcely-conscious Pellew was 'carried to Commissioner Fanshaw's house in the Dock Yard' where he recovered somewhat, and after a day or two 'he was removed to the house of a friend, Dr Hawker of Plymouth'.

The ensuing court-martial failed to establish the cause of the explosion. One report stated that Captain Pellew had represented that the fore magazine was so badly constructed as to be unsafe. Some thought that men were dangerously employed 'drawing the guns' – a procedure involving the collection of loose gunpowder from them – without having extinguished the galley fires. There was even a rumour, based on the number of naked bodies picked up from the water, that the explosion had been caused by crew members who did not wish to put to sea. At length suspicion settled on the gunner who was believed to have been fraudulently selling gunpowder and had inadvertently laid a trail of powder back to the magazine. He had apparently that morning drawn the keys to the magazines without the knowledge or permission of the first lieutenant, and had also 'been seen at Dock very much in liquor' that morning; moreover, a sack was later dredged up 'filled with gunpowder at bottom, and just topped with biscuit' – being the means by which he might have smuggled powder from the ship. After examining the survivors, the court 'very honourably acquitted the captain and officers of every idea of remissness or neglect'. Pellew then had the satisfaction of being asked by the survivors 'that he would suffer them to be partners of his fortune, when he should obtain a ship, having so long sailed with him'. Meanwhile attempts to raise *Amphion* proved unsuccessful: she was dragged to a nearby jetty and broken up.

In contrast to today's disasters, those of 200 years ago commonly stimulated a poetic response. Thus, the *Naval Chronicle* of 1800 also carried a poem of some length, submitted by 'A Constant Reader', entitled 'On Viewing the Wreck of the *Amphion*', and of which the following lines are a fair specimen:

'Unfurl the sail! The dashing oar then ply!
 Nor careless see a brother's corpse float by;
 Stretch to his poor remains a friendly hand,
 In decent silence bear him to the land;
 There in some hallowed spot behold him laid,
 And sacred rites be to his memory paid.
 There shall the mangled sailor peaceful rest,
 And the green turf lie lightly on his breast.

But who shall dry a mournful widow's eyes,
 Or strive to sooth the hapless orphan's cries?
 Shall he who Britain's boldest foers withstood,
 Have his lov'd offspring beg their scanty food?

Sources

Tegg, Thomas – *Dreadful explosion of His Majesty's Frigate Amphion ... September 22nd 1796 ... including the melancholy consequences and remarkable preservation of the captain, boatswain and a few others.* (T. Tegg: London: c1796)

Naval Chronicle – Vol 3 1800

DNB – Sir Isaac Pellew 1758-1832

Osler, Ed. – *Life of Admiral Viscount Exmouth: Appendix* (Smith, Elder & Co, Cornhill 1835)

Gentleman's Magazine – October and November 1796

Heppell, David J. – *British Warship Losses in the Age of Sail, 1650 – 1859*
 ISBN 0948864303

Sherborne Mercury – 26 September 1796

The help of Joyce Brown, Local and Naval Studies Librarian, City of Plymouth Library and Information Services, is gratefully acknowledged.

COMMON FIELDS ENCLOSED AND REGRETTED: A SEVENTEENTH CENTURY ARGUMENT AMONG NORTH DEVON FARMERS

Sarah Child

Much research has been devoted to showing that there is evidence of common field systems in numerous parishes in Devon and Cornwall, and that there are several examples of their survival even into the nineteenth century^{1,2}. General agreement remains, however, that arable common fields in the South West did disappear very rapidly from the fourteenth century onwards with the development of pastoral farming. Common meadow, always the most valuable acreage, and easier to share, held out longer.

The record of a dispute between two Devon tenant farmers in approximately 1600 throws light on the organisation of a Tudor enclosure of common fields, and on how long it was remembered as an innovation. Thomas Scalley and Robert Cudmore farmed East and West Backstone respectively in the parish of Rackenford, eight miles from Tiverton. The two farms made up what had been a small manorial unit, described in Domesday as having land for one plough, with two slaves, and two smallholders with half a plough.³ The poll tax entry of 1332¹ suggests that division between only two farmers became the normal pattern of occupation early on; certainly by 1428 Backstone consisted of West Backstone, belonging to the Cruwys family of Cruwys Morchard, and East Backstone, belonging to the Hacche estate, later absorbed by the Aclands. Various leases show the two farms let by these two estates, on the usual system of three lives. The two farm houses were literally side by side.

Farmers Scalley and Cudmore quarrelled essentially about boundaries, as farmers do. Relations were further embittered however by the fact that at an earlier stage in their relationship Scalley had agreed to stand surety for £134 of debts owed by Cudmore, a sum for which by the date of the dispute he realised he had become liable. Perhaps mainly for this reason he launched a complaint to Chancery. This document⁵ outlined the history of the two holdings:

unto the which tenements dyvers parcellls of ground are and have beene belonginge...unparted and so were occupied by the tenants and occupiers of the same and yet the inheritance of them was severall, and belonged to two severall lords.

The Scalley lawyer then went on to explain that about forty years earlier the tenants at that date, John Dodge and Ralph Bickmore:

for their better and more peaceable enjoyment of their said tenements and grounds in severall they agreed...that the grounds and other commodities and easements thereto belonginge then lying undivided and used or occupied in common betweene them

would be better divided, in order to avoid 'strife and contention'. They therefore approached their respective landlords and asked for their agreement to an equal division. The landlords being willing:

fower indifferent and discrete gentlemen were chosen to make an equall dyvision of their said tenements and grounds...which said gentlemen upon good deliberation did make and sett downe a course and means of dyvision to be had and contynued of all the grounds...then being in common and undyvyded, and also sett downe an order for fences and enclosures to be made in and betweene the said grounds...

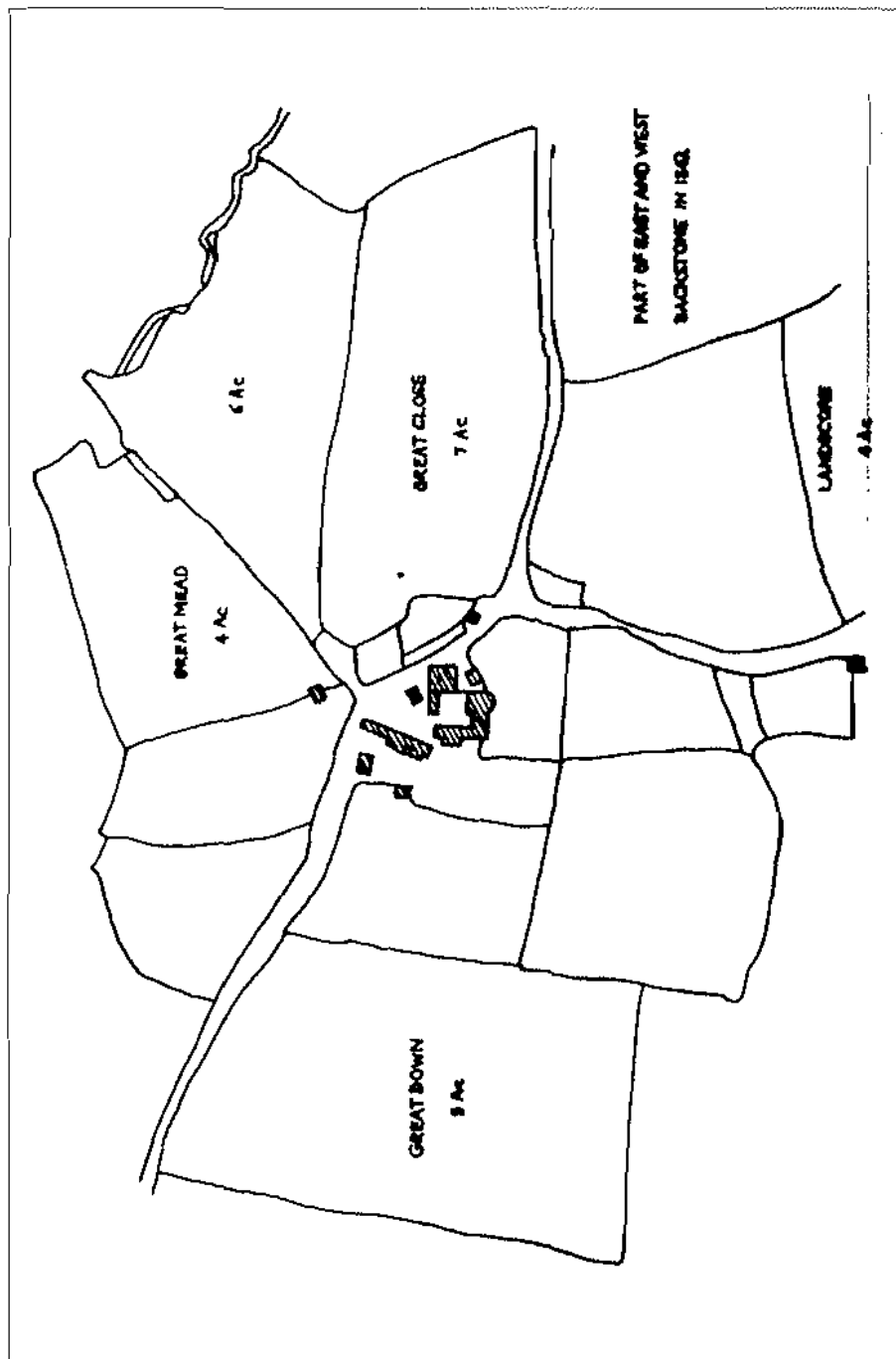
Farmers Dodge and Bickmore were according to the complaint happy with the division. They set up hedges and fences as directed and settled down 'to quietlie enjoye and occupye the same in severall. Thomas Seeley, however, as the subsequent life tenant of East Backstone (he bought his lease in 1599/1600⁶, though this shows that he was in occupation of at least part of the farm for some years before this), was less fortunate in his neighbour. West Backstone was now let to Robert Cudmore, who had sub-let some part of his land to William Cade; these two had become envious of the East Backstone land, which Seeley according to himself 'by greater charges and paynes hath improved.' Not only were they failing to maintain the hedges so that cattle strayed across his ground, but

havinge spent and wooren out their tenement of West Bagston with billadges doe give out in speeches that they have good intereste in Easte Bagston, and that they will occupie yt in common agayne, and that by the lawe they are not bound to occupie yt in severall...and that they will have parte of the corne growing upon Easte Bagston...

This allegation would seem to confirm that at least part of the enclosure had been of arable common land.

The Scalley complaint unfortunately bears no date, but it refers to the lease for lives from the Aclands, which is dated 10 March 1599/1600, and is still addressed to Queen Elizabeth, so must predate March 1602/03. This puts the original enclosure of the Backstone common fields at about 1560, though perhaps one should allow for some exaggeration of the antiquity of the arrangement. It cannot have been later than 1581, by which year Ralph Bickmore has disappeared from the list of Rackenford taxpayers. No answer to the complaint nor any Chancery ruling have been identified; it was quite usual in such cases for the original complaint to be intended as a means of reaching a local settlement⁷, which may have been the situation here.

It would be interesting to be able to identify the fields in question. The field pattern has hardly changed at all since the 1842 tithe survey. The tithe map gives no obvious hint of strip cultivation anywhere in the original Backstone unit, which probably amounted to about 350 acres. West Backstone was described as consisting of 200 acres in the mid 1560s, when it was valued at £50 for a three-life lease.⁸ East Backstone was leased from the Aclands in 1573, also on three lives, for £30⁹, which suggests that its acreage was rather smaller. In the nineteenth century the two farms came into one ownership; they were merged and the northern area separated off as a new farm, Backstone Moor or North Backstone; all three farms in 1842 amounted to 340 acres with another seven acres of wood retained by the landlord. The large, regular field pattern of North Backstone suggests that most of this was a relatively recent intake from the moor. The field pattern of East and West Backstone is the traditional irregular patchwork, and the tithe map field names may offer some clue. Three fields, all fairly close to the farm buildings, have the prefix 'Great', although several others are as large



or larger. These are Great Down, Great Mead and Great Close, which in 1842 were in use as arable in the first case and meadow for the other two. More significantly, a triangular six acre field lies between Great Close and Great Mead, and it seems possible to recognise here a reference in the Acland lease to Thomas Seeley of March 1599/1600:

and also those six acres of lande in Easte Backstone between the landcores there as by markes and boundes doth appeare...

There is no similar pattern anywhere else on the farm, so it seems likely that these were the landcores. The term literally means boundary, but as Professor Finberg has pointed out¹⁰ there was a Devon usage describing tenants of arable in open field, as holding on or by landcore, and the name has elsewhere been found to be associated with surviving strip patterns.¹¹ There is however also another field, on the western side of the farm, actually called Landcore, although this lies in something more like a boundary position.

Whichever the common fields of the original hamlet may be, the record of this small dispute shows that the system was not easily forgotten. Quarrelling farmers as much as forty years after enclosure had been agreed might still threaten reoccupation, and remembered old rights to their neighbour's corn.

Notes and References

1. Finberg, H.P.R., 'The Open Field in Devon' in *Devonshire Studies*, Cape, 1952, reprinted in *West-Country Historical Studies*, David & Charles, 1999.
2. Fox, H.S.A., 'Field Systems of East and South Devon Part I' in *Transactions of the Devonshire Association*, 104, 1972, p81-135.
3. *Domesday Book, Devon Part One 29.1* (ed John Morris) Phillimore, 1985.
4. *Devonshire Lay Subsidy 1332* (ed Audrey Erskine), Devon and Cornwall Record Society New Series Vol 14, 1969.
5. Public Record Office (PRO), C3 290/36.
6. Devon Record Office, Acland papers, 1148m/add2/L36/17.
7. Horwitz, H., *Chancery Equity Records and Proceedings 1600-1800*, HMSO, London, 2nd ed, 1998, p26.
8. PRO C3 16/58.
9. DRO, Acland papers, 1148m/add2/L36/16.
10. Finberg, (*op cit*) p 140.
11. Finberg, (*op cit*) p 141.

Sarah Child BA worked as a publisher in the field of economics and business information before retiring and finding time for local history. She and her husband farm West Backstone at Rackenford.

THE FENNY BRIDGES MEMORIAL

Robin Stanes



On 29 July 2000, on the 451st anniversary of the battle of Fenny Bridges, the memorial shown in the photograph was dedicated in the presence of many men and women from Devon and Cornwall. The stone stands beside the road from Fenny Bridges to Feniton, just north of where that road is bridged by the new A30 embankment. The site overlooks, across the Vine water, part of the meadow, known locally as Bloody Meadow, where the battle was fought. This is marked with crossed swords on some ordnance maps. The site is rather far away from the bridge across the Otter where the main fighting seems to have taken place, but from where it is the inscriptions are readable from the road, there is room to stop, and the site was available.

The Honiton History Society, some three years ago, thought it would be good to commemorate the battle with a stone. Honiton was the nearest town; it was there that Lord Russell made his headquarters and waited in some alarm for supplies of men and money to arrive before advancing on Exeter. Sampford Cotenay had celebrated its dramatic part in the Prayer Book Rebellion in 1999 and the Cornish had staged a march to Exeter also, but no other attempt was being made to commemorate the other bloody engagements of the Prayer Book Rebellion in east Devon such as took place at Carey's windmill above Woodbury, in the streets of Clyst St Mary, and on Clyst Heath,

once uncultivated land that lay between that village and Exeter, perhaps around Middlemoor.

Fortunately in a way, the line of the proposed new A30 ran right through Bloody Meadow and this seemed to provide an opportunity to get both practical and financial help from the road contractors Balfour Beatty TA. An approach was made to them and they expressed a willingness to help. This was to be very generously forthcoming both practically and financially, but it was clear that no memorial could be put up in the 450th anniversary year, because the building of the new embankment would then be in full swing. BBTa identified the existing site for the memorial and approached Mr Gibbins and Mr Harwood the landowners concerned. They knew about the battle and were keen to help and made the land available absolutely freely. It was ascertained that there was no need for planning permission and the highways authority raised no objections provided there was a minor, easily effected, widening of the road.

The Cornish had of course to be involved as they were so evidently present in strength at Fenny Bridges and the roots of the Prayer Book Rebellion grew in part in Cornish soil. Keskerdh Kernow ('Cornwall marching'), a body that promotes Cornish history, was keen to participate. The organisation had already placed stones or plaques near Guildford and at Blackheath to commemorate the Cornish march on London in 1497, as well as in Bodmin and St Keverne in Cornwall.

The Keskerdh Kernow committee offered to get the stone cut in Cornwall of Cornish granite and to transport it to the site at Fenny Bridges. It was desirable to agree on the wording. Cornwall had to come before Devon, and the Cornish included a reference to the preservation of the Cornish language. In fact it was the loss of the original Latin of the Mass and the substitution of English that the rebels objected to in both counties, although this was obviously doubly undesirable to those Cornish who had no English. Services totally in English must have made that language more and more familiar. It was agreed that the inscriptions should be in both languages.

The stone of course had to be paid for. The bulk of the money came from the generosity of Balfour Beatty but the Honiton History Society wrote to all the local councils and societies for help. Devon County Council, East Devon District Council, Ottery St Mary Town Council, Honiton Town Council, Feniton Parish Council, Gittisham Parish Council, the Devon History Society, the Honiton History Society, the Uffculme Archive Group and Keskerdh Kernow all contributed and all were invited and sent representatives to the dedication. Apart from the stone there were other bills to pay. The road near the memorial had to be closed for two hours for the dedication and traffic diverted with signs. This could only be done by those 'qualified' to do so and they had to be paid, and this cost around £200!

The stone was in fact put in place in March 2000 without any ceremony. That was to wait until July. This work was done by Balfour Beatty who turfed over the area around the stone and planted some saplings. It is, we hope, there to stay; it is granite, firmly embedded, in no one's way and hard to vandalise.

On 29 July, the anniversary, many of the Cornish took the train to Feniton station and marched from there to the memorial site through Feniton village with banners flying. These mainly comprised St Piran's banner, a white cross on a black ground, but there were also replicas of the banner certainly carried by the rebels at the Pilgrimage of Grace in 1537 and almost certainly in 1549 in Devon and Cornwall too, that of the 'Five Wounds of Christ'. Devon was not entirely outdone. Devon County Council lent its fine armorial banner for the occasion and this and another banner of the Five Wounds were carried by members of the locally based 'Western Rising' group, who own a banner



of the Five Wounds and take every opportunity to commemorate the events of 1549, and do so in Tudor costume. The town crier of Honiton in full dress also attended and began the proceedings. DHS members will remember that the banner belonging to the Western Rising Group was on display at the society's meeting at Sampford Courtenay last spring. They kindly helped to steward the meeting and distributed a printed leaflet containing John Hooker's account of the battle. It is the only detailed account, and by a contemporary. Hooker was probably besieged in Exeter at the time, where he says he witnessed some of the events he describes.

On coming within sight of the memorial the Cornish, some dressed in Cornish kilts, raised the first of many shouts, now traditional, of 'Oggy Oggy Oggy'. From then on the occasion became as much an enthusiastic celebration of Cornish identity as a commemoration of the bloody event common to both counties' history.

About 150 members of the general public gathered to hear the dedication service conducted in both languages by the Rev. Coombe, Anglican Chaplain of Keskerdh Kernow, and by Father O'Hagan of St Rita's Catholic Church in Honiton. The Rector of Feniton could not be present, to his regret. Dennis Cooper, Chairman of the Honiton History Society, and Anne Trevenen Jenkin of the Cornish Gorsedd of Bards spoke a few words for the occasion, as did the writer of this, and Tony Piper of Keskerdh Kernow. After that, a very good lunch was held in Feniton parish hall provided by the Women's Institute.

Honiton History Society and Keskerdh Kernow have perhaps added a new and permanent mark to the map of England. Fenny Bridges is not on the official tourist list of English battles, being dismissed as a skirmish. Official history, for a long time, preferred to ignore the existence of any opposition to the Protestant Reformation and the new Prayer Book in England, but Fenny Bridges was just one of five engagements in Devon and followed disturbances in Cornwall and was itself followed by an unknown number of executions. It was remembered as 'the commotion time' by local people. The

site was well known and accessible and it is one Devonshire battle that some people have heard of. It is hardly arguable that the history of England might have been different if Lord Russell had been put to flight on 29 July, but there were disturbances in the Midlands that summer and Ket's threatening rebellion in Norfolk followed close on the rebellion in the West. The Tudor government was hard pressed and had to rely on Spanish and German mercenaries to put down the Prayer Book Rebellion in the end.

Fenny Bridges was not a 'formal' battle militarily, but like the fights at Carey's Windmill and on Clyst Heath it was in the open and not part of attempts to besiege or capture a town, as most Civil War and other fights in Devon were (Sourton Down excepted). Hooker gives three hundred slain at Fenny Bridges which suggests total forces of some size. The Cornish rebel contingent alone was, he says, 200 strong or more.

It was fierce and merciless fighting, made the more so perhaps by the presence of mercenaries. At Clyst Heath prisoners were killed out of hand in face of a perceived new threat, 900 of them, according to one account, and Hooker writes of that encounter 'great was the slaughter and cruel was the fight and such was the valour and stoutness of these men (the rebels) that the Lord Grey, by then in command reported himself that he never in all the wars he had been, did he know the like' Fenny Bridges is unlikely to have been different.

The Honiton History Society hopes that some folk will stop to look at the memorial and say to themselves 'Well I never knew that' or 'I'd like to know more'. Some, with a long view, while admiring the toughness of spirit of the rebels and feeling their anger at the threat to their way of life, may also feel that defeat of the rebels at Fenny Bridges made the horrors of full scale religious civil war in this country less likely. Some perhaps will hear, above the din of the A30, as the writer fancies he does, the faint cries and yells of men in battle four and half centuries ago, born on the wind of history; at least in the mind's ear!

THE EDDYSTONE LIGHTHOUSE

Audrey Deacon

The first lighthouse to stand on the Eddystone Rocks – a serious danger to shipping, some fifteen miles offshore from Plymouth – was designed by Henry Winstanley (1644-1703), Charles II's Clerk of Works at Newmarket and at Audley End, a great house in Essex purchased by him in 1667. Winstanley's own house, nearby at Littlebury, attracted many visitors to see the 'abundance of fine Curiosities all performed by Clockwork and suchlike'. These included, in the garden, a chair on rails, which tipped the suspecting occupant into the river.

A contemporary drawing shows the lighthouse to have been an elaborate structure, with balconies and flagpoles – to modern eyes a fanciful design, with many projections which must have made it vulnerable to rough weather. In 1697, while under construction, it was destroyed by a French privateer, and Winstanley, who was supervising the work, was carried off as a prisoner. Charles II appealed to Louis XIV to have him released, and this was readily done, in view of the valuable nature of his work. After the lighthouse was completed Winstanley visited it repeatedly, making various improvements, and he was there when the terrible storm of 26-27 November 1703 completely destroyed it, drowning him and the lighthouse keepers.

The second lighthouse was designed and built in 1706-9 by John Rudyerd, with the help of two naval shipwrights. Little is known about Rudyerd, except that he was a Cornishman who as a boy ran away to Plymouth and later became a silk merchant in London. The lighthouse, made entirely of wood, was destroyed by fire in 1755, but the three keepers survived.

The third, designed by John Smeaton, FRS (1724-92), was built in 1756-59, and was the first lighthouse to be built entirely of interlocking stone blocks. It lasted for over a hundred years, until the rock on which it stood was found to be disintegrating. Smeaton was a civil engineer who studied canal and harbour systems in Holland, built bridges and a canal in Scotland, and received a gold medal for an investigation of the power of wind and water to drive mills.

His lighthouse was replaced in 1882 by the present structure, designed by Sir James N. Douglass, Chief Engineer to Trinity House, the body still responsible for all lighthouses in Britain. He designed many lighthouses, but is remembered chiefly for his work on the replacement for Smeaton's famous structure. It was especially difficult, since a new site had to be found, and the old lighthouse had to be demolished and the upper part re-erected on Plymouth Hoe, where – as the Smeaton Tower – it still stands, while the remaining stump on the original site can still be seen from the Hoe. The construction began in July 1878 and was completed by May 1882, at a cost of £59,250 (less than estimated). In that year Douglass received a knighthood for the work. He continued his pioneering studies of lighthouse construction and later recommended the introduction of electric lighting in some cases.

The Eddystone lighthouse would have been lit by oil, and later converted to electricity. During the first half of the twentieth century the keepers were relieved by sea from Plymouth – sometimes delayed for several weeks by bad weather – but now, like all the other lighthouses in Britain – the Eddystone is fully automated and is regularly inspected by helicopter for maintenance.

Sources:

Fiennes, Celia. *Journeys* (1685-1712)
Defoe, Daniel. *Tour of the Whole Island of Great Britain* (published 1722-25).
Dictionary of National Biography
Encyclopaedia Britannica
Evening Herald (via Plymouth Central Library)

Mrs Audrey Deacon MBE (nee Hawkins), who now lives in Hertfordshire, spent her childhood in Plymouth, later served in the WRNS, and subsequently followed a career in voluntary organisations. Her wartime diaries featured in an article by Anthony Greenstreet in *The Devon Historian* 58.

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)

The Chronicles of Dartmouth. An Historical Yearly Log 1854-1954 by Don Collinson in association with *The Dartmouth Chronicle*. Published by Richard Webb, 9 Duke Street, Dartmouth. 25 October 1000. 278 pages + 6 appendices. Bibliography. Index. Profusely illustrated. £25.00. ISBN 0 9536361 00.

In his *Chronicles of Dartmouth* Don Collinson has left no page unturned or sail unfurled. Over 15 years his 'log' has been studiously researched and painstakingly assembled. The story starts in 1854, the year *The Dartmouth Chronicle* was first published by Mr Richard Cranford. Through war and peace, squabbles and intrigues and periods of poverty and prosperity the reader is taken on an absorbing historical tour ending in 1954 when *The Mew* the 'much loved ugly duckling of the river' made its last sentimental trip across the Dart.

As a link to each passing year there is a brief account of the annual regatta and some of the wonderful craft that have taken part. It was a proud day for Dartmouth when in 1856, after a visit from Queen Victoria, the Dart Yacht Club was granted the honour of adding the prefix 'Royal' to all future regattas, and in 1876 the club was rewarded with the long-coveted accolade, the right to add the prefix "Royal" to the Dart Yacht Club.

Accompanying his log are excellent photographs with explanatory texts which in themselves tell a fascinating story. Throughout the book there are also anecdotal gems: when the Naval College was commissioned in 1905, with no opening ceremony, it came as a surprise to many that the cadets were to have dancing lessons for twenty minutes each day and for forty minutes on Sundays; Keir Hardy raised a question in Parliament objecting to the use of public funds to support the College Beagle Pack; in 1881 the water purity of the Dart was illustrated by a report of too many otters when a three-foot male strutted into the bar of the Royal Dart Hotel 'and retreated hastily when patrons attempted to contain him'; during the 1939-45 war Mrs Fitzgerald Glendene was commended for organising the knitting of 2,296 pairs of sea-boot stockings for the Fleet; when rationing was still in force after the 1939-45 war a Dartmouth butcher was taken to court for using undesirable scraps of meat to make sausages. When analysed there was only 21% meat against 50% required by law. He was fined £3 plus £1 for the analyst's fee.

Dartmouth is not without its literary connections. We all know that Agatha Christie lived at Greenway, but perhaps it will come as a surprise that Flora Thompson, who wrote *Lark Rise to Candleford* and *Still Glides the Stream* was married to the post-master of Dartmouth. Christopher Milne, the son of A A Milne, opened the Harbour Bookshop in 1951 and was the co-founder of the Dartmouth and Kingswear Society in 1959.

Throughout the book there are stories of intriguing business deals and the importance and self-importance of the protagonists and how, with the emergence of the trades unions, the old order gradually changed, even in Dartmouth, when the Dock Wharf and Riverside union acted as a mediator for the lumpers (the men who heaved the coal) who were on strike.

With the demise of the Newfoundland trade in the 1870s the prosperity of

Dartmouth was at a low ebb, but fortunately the loss of this trade was soon to be replaced by the coal bunkering trade which, with its ups and downs, lasted until 1951 when the two remaining standing hulks were towed away to the breaker's yard. There is an admirable appendix outlining the history of this trade as a vital source of employment in the town.

Perhaps this is a book that will not be read by everyone from cover to cover, but it will give the reader who likes to dig and delve as the spirit moves endless pleasure.

A. Robertson

Take the Children....: The life of the lace girls, working in the Honiton and East Midlands districts, from the evidence given to John Edward White M.A. for the 1862 Royal Commission, by Alan Brown. Sheila Brown, 12 Sayesbury Avenue, Sawbridgeworth, Herts. CM21 0ED. Illustrated. i + 45 pages. £9.50 (available from the publisher and inter alia the Devon Record Office, Exeter and the Luton Museum. P & P £1.00). ISBN 0 95352063 3.

The title of this booklet describes exactly its content: an analysis of the evidence of workers and others before a parliamentary enquiry of 1862 into child employment in the Devon and Midlands domestic lace industry. The literature on the history of this industry and child labour within it is already very extensive and this work does not claim to add anything new and does not do so. Many, however, will find it both interesting and informative. The *1st Report of the Royal Commission on the Employment of Children in Trades and Manufactures* (P.P. 1863 xviii), to give its correct title and reference (not found in the booklet), is a prime source for the topic concerned, so that conclusions drawn from it here provide a basically sound impression of conditions in the industry at a particular point in time.

The serious historian, however, seeks to use as broad a spectrum of evidence as possible and there are numerous other sources which could serve to provide a more informed and contextual picture of some of the matters covered here, in particular working conditions and the educational standards of the lace girls (to which much space is devoted). The picture of the lace schools as basically concerned with teaching craft skills, operating in unhealthy conditions, using physical chastisement and, where teaching some reading, doing so inefficiently so that lace girls' educational standards were poor, is valid - but should be seen in the more general context of the time. Many other contemporary schools were conducted in as unhealthy conditions and with as strict discipline, and many children attending other schools (not excluding Church schools) left them just as illiterate and ill informed as the lace school girls, while some children received no schooling at all. Women and girls often expressed pride in the skills learnt at the lace schools and in the fame of their product. Lace girls' working conditions were better than those of children in some other employments - including, in the Westcountry, farming, surface mine work, rope making, and labour in the various kinds of textile mill. To children in the north Devon lace factories, subjected to beatings with wooden and iron bars and being punched or thrown to the ground and kicked, the lace mistress's cane would have seemed a mild corrective.

The educational backwardness of female domestic laceworkers needs also to be put into context. In 1871, before compulsory education was generally introduced and when many of the girls interviewed in the 1862 enquiry would have been of marriageable

age, only 14 per cent of brides in the Honiton registration district were unable to sign their names. This compares with 18 per cent in Devon as a whole and an overall 27 per cent in England and Wales. Indeed only three of Devon's nineteen other registration districts had lower proportions of illiterate brides.

Nevertheless, despite these quibbles, this publication, though basically a synopsis of a single source (the full text of which is available in the original published volume, modern reprints and microfiche), offers the interested non-specialist an eminently readable and reasonably sound introduction to an important aspect of the history of east Devon. Various sections provide a brief history of the industry, its organisation, the evils of the truck system, the nature of child labour (ages, earnings, work hours and conditions and their impact on health), and, particularly, as noted, the educational state of girl workers. The direct quotations from the evidence printed in the appendix to the report, with which the text is liberally laced, vividly illuminate and bring to life the experiences of the lace girls in a way that more academic works often fail to do.

W.B. Stephens

East Devon: The Travellers' Tales. Edited by Dr Todd Gray. The Mint Press, 2000. Illustrated. xxii + 210 pages + 38 reproductions of prints and photographs + location map + frontispiece. Price £12.99. ISBN 1 903356 02 4.

East Devon is the second of a series of travellers' tales to be produced by Dr Todd Gray. The third, *Cornwall*, was published during 2000 and others to follow in 2001 are Dorset, Somerset, South Devon and North Devon. This present volume consists of extracts from forty-five diaries or other travel accounts by forty-one individuals. As with his earlier volume, Dr Gray's introduction acts as a taster for the courses that follow. Each of the travellers' tales is contained in an unnumbered chapter set chronologically from 1542 to 1933 and preceded by a brief biographical note on the particular traveller, the source of the tale and a well produced extract from a contemporaneous print.

Unlike the travellers included in *Exeter*, who had paused in Exeter and described what they saw and experienced in the city, most of the tales in this later volume relate what was encountered during the process of travelling from the Bristol or London direction to Exeter. Events or objects in the east Devon area that are quite familiar to us today feature in many of the tales. Honiton lace, Axminster carpets, Beer stone and Ottery St Mary church – 'a bijou of a cathedral' Elihu Burritt (1864) calls it – would probably be included in a contemporary traveller's tale. Honiton's dipping pools were covered over in the 1960s after an unwary pedestrian stepped in one, but at least five travellers refer to their existence. Daniel Defoe (1724) gives a fairly detailed description of the watercourse and 'dipping-place' and regarded the system as far superior to that in Salisbury. The use of packhorses for the conveyance of goods is mentioned by some and Stukeley (1724) states his position on the controversy – unresolved today – surrounding the southern terminus of the Fosse Way.

As with those in the first volume, the *East Devon* tales often say much about the authors. Mrs Parry Price (1805), travelling with her female servant whom she addressed only as 'Jones', wrote her diary in the way she would have spoken and, one imagines, would have had quite a high telephone bill were she alive today. Miss Wyndham Portman (1820), 'an elderly maiden lady...accompanied by her friend Miss Philippa Grove...' writes her diary in a brusque manner, eschewing the definite article,

and probably would have dealt quite severely with Philippa had the latter pointed out the diary error about the location of the Devonshire and Dorset border. Many of the travellers paint realistic pictures using the medium of the written word but none more so than Walter White of London (1855), a cabinet maker turned librarian. His description of his walk from Lyme Regis to the Exe ferry is particularly vivid and packed with interesting observations. John Denison Champlin Junior of The United States (1884), writing in a style similar to but predating Jerome K Jerome, travelled by coach with companions from the Dorset border to Exeter. They stopped for a picnic lunch at what Champlin refers to as Fairmile but was probably Penny Bridges. Forty-seven years later, a compatriot, Charles S Brooks, travelled by 'a private motor' to Ottery St Mary on a pilgrimage to Coleridge's birthplace and writes of a connection, involving Joanna Southcott, between Ottery and San Diego in Southern California.

This is a worthy companion to Gray's *Exeter*.

D.L.B. Thomas

Exeter Engraved. Volume One: The Secular City. By Todd Gray. Exeter: The Mint Press, 2000. xx + 208 pp. Illustrated. £22.00. ISBN 1 903356 04 0.

Within scarcely more than a year The Mint Press (Todd Gray – publisher, editor, author) has put out half a dozen books of emphatically Devon interest, elegantly dressed by the admirable Short Run Press, a Sowton success story. The latest, the first volume of *Exeter Engraved*, on the secular buildings of the city, will be followed by another on the cathedral, churches and chapels, and perhaps – yes, please – one on worthies and not-so-worthies. The present book takes a rather generous definition of 'engraving' – on copper, wood and steel, etchings, line-cuts, lithographs and mezzotints, some of which use peculiar techniques with diverse results. There always was a plethora of reasons for producing prints: for historical records, for news and comment, propaganda, education, nostalgia, blatant commercialism and, perhaps above all, 'Art'. In the nineteenth-century heyday of steel engraving, illustrated books were frequently broken up, their plates taken out, enhanced by tinting or hand-colouring, mounted, framed and hung on the wall. The process continues. Bound volumes of *The Illustrated London News*, printed on poor paper, a drug on the book market fifty years ago, are nowadays avidly ransacked by print dealers. Rushed jobs, their images, rapidly drawn and engraved, have at least the virtues of immediacy and economy of line. Most of the other reproductions in this eclectic selection aim higher, some very self-consciously. Number 11, ostensibly a view of Exeter from near Whitestone – one of the best vantage points, according to the artist/engraver, T.H. Williams, a local man – is dominated by its frame of 'a sweet especial rural scene' of trees and cattle. The city itself seems secondary. (See also numbers 15, 16, 21, etc.). Coming into Exeter proper, buildings, notably the landmark Guildhall, proliferate. Many of these edifices have disappeared – thankfully, in a few instances – some even before the drawings, often copying one another, were made. A set of twenty scenes extracted from Thomas Shapter's history of the 1849 cholera outbreak is almost documentary.

Dr Gray provides a succinct Introduction, informative in techniques, artists and engravers. But he does not tell us if the images are produced actual size. The 'vignettes' certainly are, but some other specimens cry out for dimensional augmentation. The editor must be congratulated on the choice he has made from among the thousands of prints available to him in the Westcountry Studies Library and elsewhere. *Exeter*

Engraved will surely stimulate the appreciation of Exonians of the past of their urban environment, the enemies of which were identified as long ago as 1960 by W.G. Hoskins (ever-quotable) as the motor car and the speculative builder. They still are.

Ivan Roots

Whitchurch Down: A Study by Members of the Tavistock Local History Society, edited by Helen Harris, Tavistock revised edition 2000. Illustrated. 46 page + 4 monochrome & 12 colour prints (2 on cover) + 2 inside cover maps. £5.

This was first published in 1990 and was the result of a combined effort by members of a local history group led and co-ordinated by Helen Harris who also acted as its editor. It was reviewed in October 1990 in *The Devon Historian 41* by Dr Alison Grant who described it as a 'well-arranged, well-researched, well-referenced, and interesting study.' The present edition has involved some updating and supplementation and is produced in A5 with card covers instead of the original A4 with paper covers. Colour illustrations are excellent and exceptionally well reproduced as are those in monochrome, if one takes account of the age and probable limitations of the originals. To Dr Grant's superlatives for the first edition can be added 'well-produced and attractive' for this 2000 edition.

D L B Thomas

DEVON HISTORY NEWS

Devon Book of the Year 1999 – This was awarded at the annual general meeting of the Devon History Society at St Luke's, Exeter on 28 October. There were two works recognised this year. The first was the *Historical atlas of south-west England*, that monumental compilation on all aspects of the history of the region with more than sixty contributors. Mary Ravenhill was there to accept the award on behalf of the two editors Professor Roger Kain and the late Professor William Ravenhill. The other work was *The letters of Sir Walter Raleigh*, edited by the late Agnes Latham and Professor Joyce Youings. This work has been many years in preparation and serves to demonstrate that the writing of history is not confined to the production of new texts but also includes making available scholarly editions of historical source materials. It is also a recognition of half a century's contribution to historical research and the editing of texts by Professor Joyce Youings, which started with the publication in 1955 of *Devon monastic lands: a calendar of particulars for grants, 1536-1558*, the first in the new series of Devon and Cornwall Record Society's publications. Professor Youings was able to attend and rose from her wheelchair to give a typically modest and witty acceptance speech. As both works were published by the University of Exeter Press, a certificate was also presented to a representative of the publishers.

DHS website. The Devon History Society now has a website as follows: www.devonhistorysociety.org.uk which has already drawn much attention. Information is given about the DHS and its journal, and the guest page provides a forum for members' and others' queries. Dr Sadru Bhanji, the Society's Hon Treasurer, has been responsible for arranging the website's establishment.

Interment of medieval priests' remains. On 30 August 2000 – St Rumon's day – the bones of three high-ranking priests of Tavistock's former Benedictine abbey (dedicated to St Mary and St Rumon) were interred within the town's parish church. They were discovered in 1997 during excavations in Tavistock's Bedford Square for pipelaying, by South West Water. As the work proceeded across the area previously occupied by the high altar of the abbey church a stone-lined grave was discovered, containing the human remains. Also in the grave were remnants of vestments, and a chalice and paten. The presence of these artefacts, and the siting of the grave (ordinary monks had a separate burial ground) suggested that the human remains were of high ranking priests, probably of abbots or bishops. After being drawn and photographed in situ the bones were removed for examination by experts, which lasted over three years. They suggested that all were of males, one aged around 45 and the other two from 25-35; two bore evidence of healed fractures, while one may have had osteoarthritis. Peter Weddell of Exeter Archaeology reported that the vestment remains were from no later than the thirteenth century.

For the re-interment in the parish church, which originates from the twelfth century and survived the Dissolution of the Monasteries in 1539, a small vault was prepared at the building's west end. Close beside it is another vault in which bones of Ordluff, founder of Tavistock Abbey, were interred in 1934 following their earlier discovery. During a well-attended service conducted by the Vicar, the Reverend Prebendary John Rawlings, the bones, contained in a small coffin specially made by a member of the congregation Mr Victor Doidge, were laid in the vault, and prayers were said in Latin, the

language the abbots would have used. The vault is now covered by a slab bearing the inscription: 'Abbots of Tavistock, reburied 2000'.

Poltimore House regeneration. After several years of dereliction historic Poltimore House, north-east of Exeter, is currently the subject of hoped-for restoration by Poltimore House Trust, for intended use as an arts centre of national significance. Built in the late sixteenth century by Sir Richard Bampfylde, the house was the scene of the signing, on 9 April 1646, of the Treaty of Exeter, which ended the siege of Exeter during the Civil War. The house continued in Bampfylde ownership until 1942 although not lived-in by the family for some years. The building was leased to a girls' school from 1922 to 1939 after which it accommodated boys from Dover College during wartime evacuation. Later it was run as a hospital before being vacated in the 1970s, after which it became the subject of vandalism and fire.

Listed as Grade II* the building was acquired by Buildings At Risk Trust, with support from East Devon District Council, in 1996. In 1998 it was chosen from thirteen possible locations in Devon for the future home of the Centre for Contemporary Art and the Natural World. At the suggestion of English Heritage that a local trust would be the more appropriate owner for the property, the Poltimore House Trust was established early in 2000, and purchase completed in May, with the help of East Devon District Council, Devon County Council, and English Heritage.

The Trust, a registered charity, is now striving for funds to enable architect-produced plans to be put into effect. These have the backing of English Heritage and the support of the National Lottery through the Arts Council of Great Britain. It is hoped that there may yet be a new life and restored beauty for this historic Devon property.

Further information may be obtained from the Poltimore House Trust's Hon Secretary, Mr Alan Payne, 18 Cathedral Yard, Exeter, EX1 1HE.

Axminster Historical Society's spring meetings include a talk by Mr Laurence Hitchcock on Thursday 5 April on 'The History of Axminster Carpets', and on Thursday 3 May archaeologist Mr John Allen will speak on 'The Building of Exeter Cathedral'. The meetings are held at the Masonic Hall, South Street, at 7.30 p.m. Further information from the Hon Sec M.E. Dangerfield.

Wembury Local History Society has an interesting programme for 2001, including talks on postcard collections, the Britycheston manor of Wembury, the moorland Plym, the history of Newton and Noss, and Victorian and Edwardian Plymouth. For further information contact the Hon Sec on 01752 862164.

Abridged Report & Minutes of the Thirtieth Annual General Meeting held at the University of Exeter School of Education on 28 October 2000

NB: the formal Report and Minutes containing transcripts of the Officers' annual reports will be available for inspection at the 2001 AGM or may be inspected at reasonable hours by appointment with the Honorary Secretary.

Present: the President, Dr W B Stephens, was in the Chair and there were 43 other members, as listed in the attendance register, present.

1. Apologies for absence: apologies for absence were reported from Professor Orme, Miss Smith, Group Captain Goodman and Messes Coulter and Stoyke.

2. Minutes of the last Annual General Meeting: the Minutes of the 29th Annual General Meeting that had been printed in *The Devon Historian* No 60 were approved and signed by the President. There were no matters arising.

3. Honorary Secretary's Annual Report: the Secretary reported that three meetings of Council had been held during the last year and two conferences. Specific matters discussed by the Council included storage by Mrs Purves of Woodbury of surplus booklets; the appointment of an awards committee; designs for a logo for the Society's stationery; the Society's new Web; the Victoria History of the Counties of England and the support given by the Society for various projects.

The Spring Conference, attended by about 70 members and guests, was held at Sampford Courtenay, birthplace of the Prayer Book Rebellion. Speakers were Mr D Miles and Dr Mark Stoyke.

The Summer Conference, attended by about 75 members, guests and members of the Devonshire Association, was held at Barnstaple. Papers were presented by Dr Cornford, Mr Robin Stanes, Dr Alison Grant, Dr Todd Gray and Mrs Helen Harris.

Organisation of both conferences was of a high standard and the thanks of the Society are due to Miss Elizabeth Maycock and Mr Robin Stanes and, in the case of Barnstaple, Mr James Coulter.

The Honorary Secretary, commenting on his first year in office, thanked his predecessor, Mrs Sheila Stirling, for handing over the affairs in such a methodical state; Mr Tony Collings for his accurate minute taking and the Chairman, Mr Adrian Reed, for his advice and guidance.

4. Honorary Treasurer's Annual Report: the Treasurer reported that the numbers of both honorary life members and life members had increased by one; ordinary members and corporate members remained the same; family members decreased by three and affiliated bodies had increased by six. Subscriptions and profit on investments are up, receipts and interest down and the gross income £5,016.30 compared with £5,150.01 last year. Gross expenditure is £3,045.17 compared with £3,333.54 last year and the excess of income over expenditure £1,971 compared with £1,816.47. The money carried forward, £4,360.98, represents the Society's working funds and, in addition, £4,029.01 is deposited in a building society account.

Unless there was a substantial increase in the cost of producing *The Devon Historian*

it was anticipated that subscription rates would remain at the present level for some time. The Society may well be asked in the future to make a contribution towards a relaunch of the Victoria History of Devon. A sum of £2,500 over five years was committed a few years ago but the Council agreed recently to reconsider this offer should it be approached again.

A question from the floor concerning the Victoria County History was referred to Mr Maxted who said that the role of the Society should be to encourage larger bodies to contribute the matching funding that would be required. The President referred to the large sum that would be required to relaunch the project and agreed with Mr Maxted's comments.

5. Honorary Editor's Annual Report: the Honorary Editor reported that issues 60 and 61 of *The Devon Historian* had been published in April and October respectively. She expressed her gratitude to those who had contributed to the journal's content. Papers have ranged over a time span from St Petroc to the Second World War. Book reviews continued to be included in the journal. These have increased in number because of the many town and parish histories produced to mark the Millennium and many of these have, because of space limitations, been included in a composite form. All who felt drawn to the investigation of Devon's history were invited to consider offering a paper for consideration. Guide notes for contributors were included on page 2 of the journal. Short articles of 1000 words or fewer and news items about any particular discoveries or work being carried out by local societies were also welcome.

6. Elections for the year 2000/2001: Before opening this item the President said that he wished to thank the Officers for the considerable work that had been done during the preceding year.

The Officers who had served during 1999/2000 had agreed to serve during 2000/2001 and were re-elected *nem con*.

There were no nominations for the two vacancies for Council members and the remaining members who had served during 1999/2000 were re-elected *nem con*.

The Vice-Chairman drew attention to the possibility for co-opting members during the year if this proved desirable.

The President expressed his thanks to the resigning member of Council, Mr James Coulter, for his service on the Council.

7. Programme for 2001: Miss Elizabeth Maycock reported that the Spring Meeting would take place in Sidmouth on 24 March; the Summer Meeting at Great Torrington on 7 July and the thirty-first Annual General Meeting at Exeter on 27 October 2001.

8. Any other business: Dr Sadru Bhanji, who was responsible for arranging the Society's recently established website, reported the present content of the web and how it might be accessed. It was asked whether other county and regional societies could be approached and invited to send in their programmes in an effort to avoid the clashing of dates. The Honorary Secretary said that he would be doing this as well as writing to local history societies to ask whether they wished their programmes to be placed on the web and whether they wished one of their number to be named as a contact. Dr Bhanji was thanked for his exposition.

University of Exeter Press

Titles of interest

The Liberal Party in South-West Britain since 1918

Garry Tregidga

288 pages illustrated 0 85989 679 X hb £35.00

This book makes a distinctive contribution to one of the most controversial subjects in twentieth-century British politics, the decline of the Liberal Party. It moves away from the conventional focus on urban Britain to the neglected world of rural and small-town politics, and explores differences within the South West itself, from Celtic Cornwall to modern 'Wessex'.

The West Country as a Literary Invention

Putting Fiction in Its Place

Simon Trezise

256 pages illustrated 0 85989 538 6 pb £13.99 0 85989 537 8 hb £42.50

Is the 'West Country' on the map or in the mind? This book is a journey through history and ideas, offering a literary angle on a representative selection of places. The chosen texts represent the topography of the West Country and the book is a guide for those who want to travel through the region, whether on foot or in their imagination.

Historical Atlas of South-West England

edited by Roger Kain and William Ravenhill

588 pages 395 maps 150 illustrations 0 85989 434 7 £65.00

DEVON HISTORY SOCIETY'S

BOOK OF THE YEAR 1999 - COUNTY PRIZE

'This is local history at its best, informed throughout by a strong sense of place but resting always on documentary evidence and on an awareness of larger patterns in a wider world.' *English Historical Review*

The Letters of Sir Walter Raleigh

edited by Agnes Latham and Joyce Youings

466 pages illustrated 0 85989 527 0 £45.00

DEVON HISTORY SOCIETY'S

BOOK OF THE YEAR 1999 - SPECIAL SUBJECT PRIZE

'The presses regularly roll out a new life of the great Devonian, but few if any add much of significance. This book is different.'

Devon and Cornwall Notes and Queries



UNIVERSITY
of
EXETER
PRESS

University of Exeter Press

Reed Hall, Streatham Drive, Exeter, EX4 4QR, UK
Tel 01392 263066 Fax 01392 263064 Email UEP@ex.ac.uk