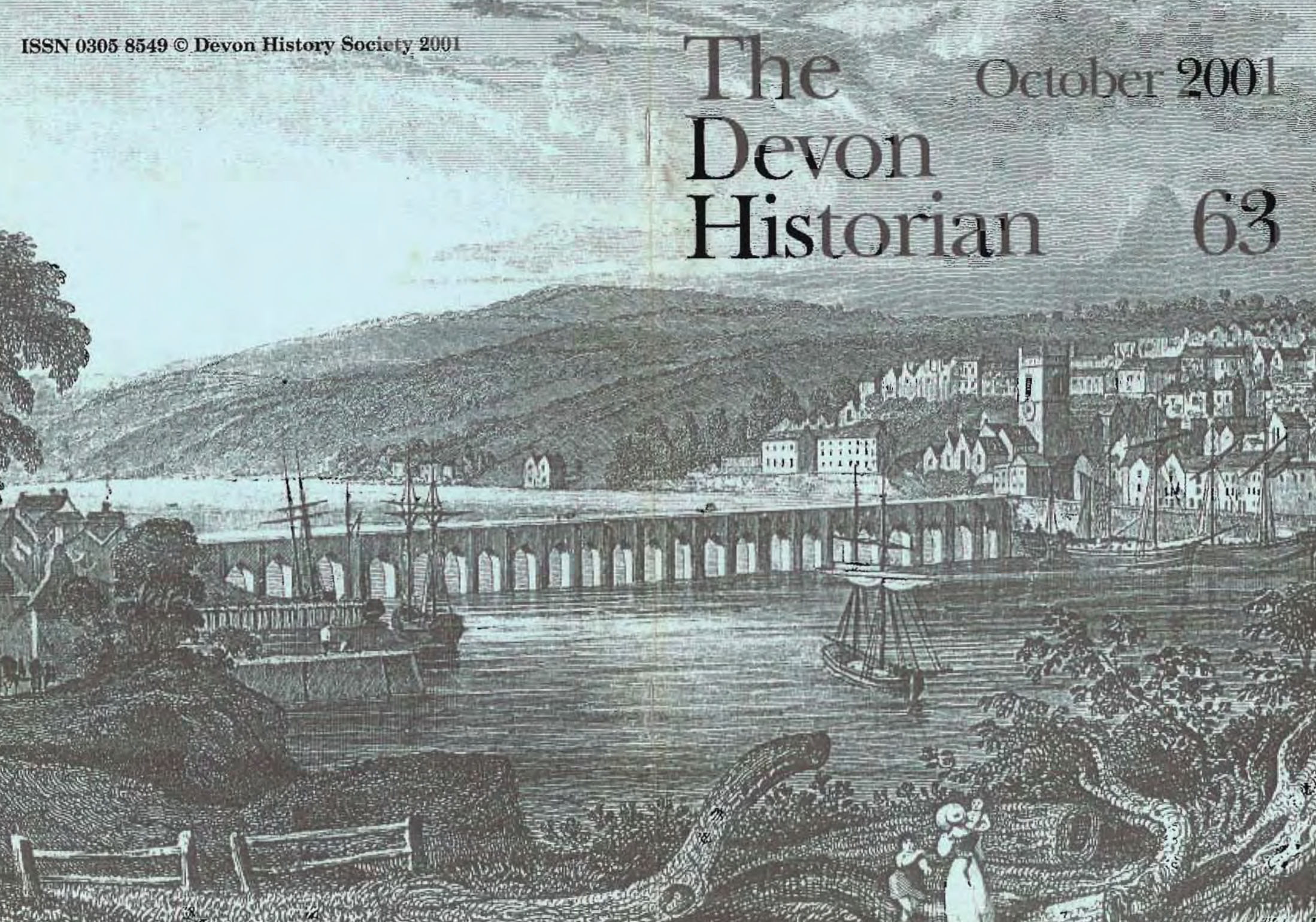


The Devon Historian  
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The AGM of the Society will take place on Saturday 27 October at St Luke's College, Exeter.

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## DEVON HISTORY SOCIETY PUBLICATIONS

Current and back issues of *The Devon Historian* (except for numbers 7, 11, 15, 16 and 23) can be obtained from 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.

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## NOTE FOR CONTRIBUTORS

Articles are welcomed by the Hon. Editor to be considered for publication in *The Devon Historian*. Generally the length should not exceed 2,000 - 2,500 words (plus notes and possible illustrations), although much shorter pieces of suitable substance may also be acceptable, as are items of information concerning museums, local societies and particular projects being undertaken.

To assist the work of the Editor and the printers please ensure that contributions are clearly typewritten, on one side of the paper only, with **double spacing** and adequate margins, and also, as far as possible, that the journal's style is followed on such matters as the restrained use of capital letters, initial single rather than double inverted commas, the writing of the date thus e.g.: 30 November 2001, etc.

## THE EXE VALLEY ROAD IN DEVON

A. Brian George

Most of the road that runs due north from Exeter to the north Somerset coast near Minehead (A396) follows the valley of the River Exe. Originally the Devonshire portion from Exeter to Exebridge, near Morebath, was routed over Stoke Hill, over the hill north of Silverton and over the hill between Tiverton and Bampton and again, and as part of the Minehead Trust, over the hill from Bampton to Exebridge. While this was suitable for horses and pack-horses, it was certainly not suitable for wheeled traffic and the advent of the turnpike trusts in the mid eighteenth century brought a rapid change to the highway alignment.

The Exeter Turnpike Trust formed in 1753<sup>1</sup> with 150 miles of road was responsible for the 6 miles and 5 furlongs between St Agnes Chapel (Sidwell Street) Exeter to Silverton. The Tiverton Turnpike Trust, formed in 1757<sup>2</sup> with 73 miles of road by 1811, was responsible from Silverton to Tiverton over Bampton Down to Bathern Bridge, Bampton. The Tiverton Trust was also responsible for the road from Tiverton through Cadbury to Crediton and for Bickleigh Bridge as the only named bridge to be owned by the trust. In 1757, in preparation for its original Act, a census of traffic on Exeter Road, Tiverton, taken from 17 to 30 November<sup>3</sup> recorded 5 coaches, 10 waggons with 4 horses, 1021 horses, together with cattle and sheep, showing that at that time wheeled traffic was not significant. Most of the subsequent improvements to form the



Bickleigh Bridge over River Exe.

valley route fell to the Tiverton Trust. Bickleigh Bridge had been built in 1630-40 by Hiram Arthur, who died in the reign of Charles I and the Act gave authority for widening the bridge in 1772 by 5 to 6 feet on the upstream side of the bridge to its present dimensions and the trust took over the 3 miles of road that led to Silverton, thereby relieving the road over the high ground and through Butterleigh. Bickleigh Bridge has an imposing site just upstream of a weir that provides head for the nearby Bickleigh Mill. The bridge has five arches of spans 22ft; 23ft; 23ft; 23ft 3in; and 20ft looking downstream. It is therefore difficult for motor cars to pass each other on the bridge.

The Tiverton Turnpike Trust confirmed its 73 miles of road in an Act of 1811<sup>4</sup> and then took a major step forward in 1813 with another Act<sup>5</sup>. This was as follows:-

From the town of Tiverton to Bampton by way of Bolham and Cove and from Chapman's bridge in the parish of Bampton by Duval, Westbrook and Wonham into the road near Exebridge turnpike gate.

The turnpike road from the tollhouse near Bickleigh bridge into the present road from Tiverton to Exeter between the fourth and fifth milestones and from the bottom of Cobland Cross hill, Bickleigh into the said road near Moon Banks Lane thro' said road into Exeter turnpike road near the fifth milestone and from Stoke bridge to Marypole Head and thence to the City of Exeter.

Some interpretation of these two paragraphs is necessary. Chapman's bridge appears to refer to a small bridge over the river Bathern that is now occupied by the A396 crossing near the junction with the road into Bampton at map reference SS 955 209. Duval is Duvale and Wonham House and Wood stand overlooking Oakfordbridge. The road from Tiverton to Silverton via Butterleigh was just over 6 miles long. Butterleigh was between the fourth and fifth milestone, Silverton was near the sixth milestone and the junction with the fifth milestone was the Exeter Trust milestone near Rewe. Stoke to Marypole Head was the length of A396 from the Stoke causeway past the present industrial works to the bottom of Pennsylvania Road and up through the woods to the summit.

The 1813 Act therefore completed the valley route from Tiverton north to the Exebridge gate and south to Pennsylvania Road as we now know it. This left the length from Cowley Bridge to the latter place to be built. It was accomplished by the Exeter Turnpike Trust. On 2 June 1830 the Clerk reported<sup>6</sup> on his successful opposition in Parliament to the Tiverton Trust proposals and it was ordered that the sum not exceeding £1500 be borrowed on the credit of the tolls of the trust to complete the new Stoke route. A small improvement also carried out by the Exeter Trust was noted in the minutes of 23 March 1836 when a sum not greater than £70 2s 10d was agreed 'for cutting down the hill between Stoke and Rewe'. This easing of a sudden rise is clearly seen today.

By these improvements the road from Exeter to the Exebridge gate became a truly Exe Valley road with only minor ascents and descents. In broad terms these are as follows:-

(Heights above Ordnance Datum in feet)

<i>Original Route</i>		<i>Valley Route</i>	
Exeter	120	Exeter	120
	+394		
Stoke Hill	514		
Stoke Canon	65	Stoke Canon	65
	+782		
Christ Cross	847		+208
Butterleigh	300	Jenny's Portion	273
	+390	Bickleigh Bridge	160
Holwell Combe	690		+ 40
Tiverton	200	Tiverton	200
	+694		
Mission Room	894		+240
Bampton	350	Higher Graunge Farm	440
Combe Head	737		
	+387		
Exebridge Gate	380	Exebridge Gate	380
Total rises	+2647	Total rises	+488

Difference in total ascents 2647 - 488 = 2159

Neglecting therefore the smaller ups and downs along each route, the valley route saved some 2160 feet of rises between Exeter and the Exebridge gate. Every substantial ascent required a complementary descent, which would have been wearing on the waggon or coach's braking system. The diagram (p.7) shows this difference quite clearly. There was the penalty of increased distance at each end of this route, but it is little more than three miles overall, and for this reason the diagram is centred on Silverton, the original boundary between each turnpike trust.

Railway competition along the valley did not arrive until 1875 and 1885, just as the turnpike era was ending and the county councils were being formed. The railway alignment was much the same as the turnpike road alignment of 1813 except that even greater attention was paid to minimising inclines. The Tiverton Turnpike Trust with its large mileage of roads had shown that it had the originality and creativeness to provide the correct standard of road for its time and which today still provides a route for motor vehicles to travel safely at 40 to 50 miles per hour.

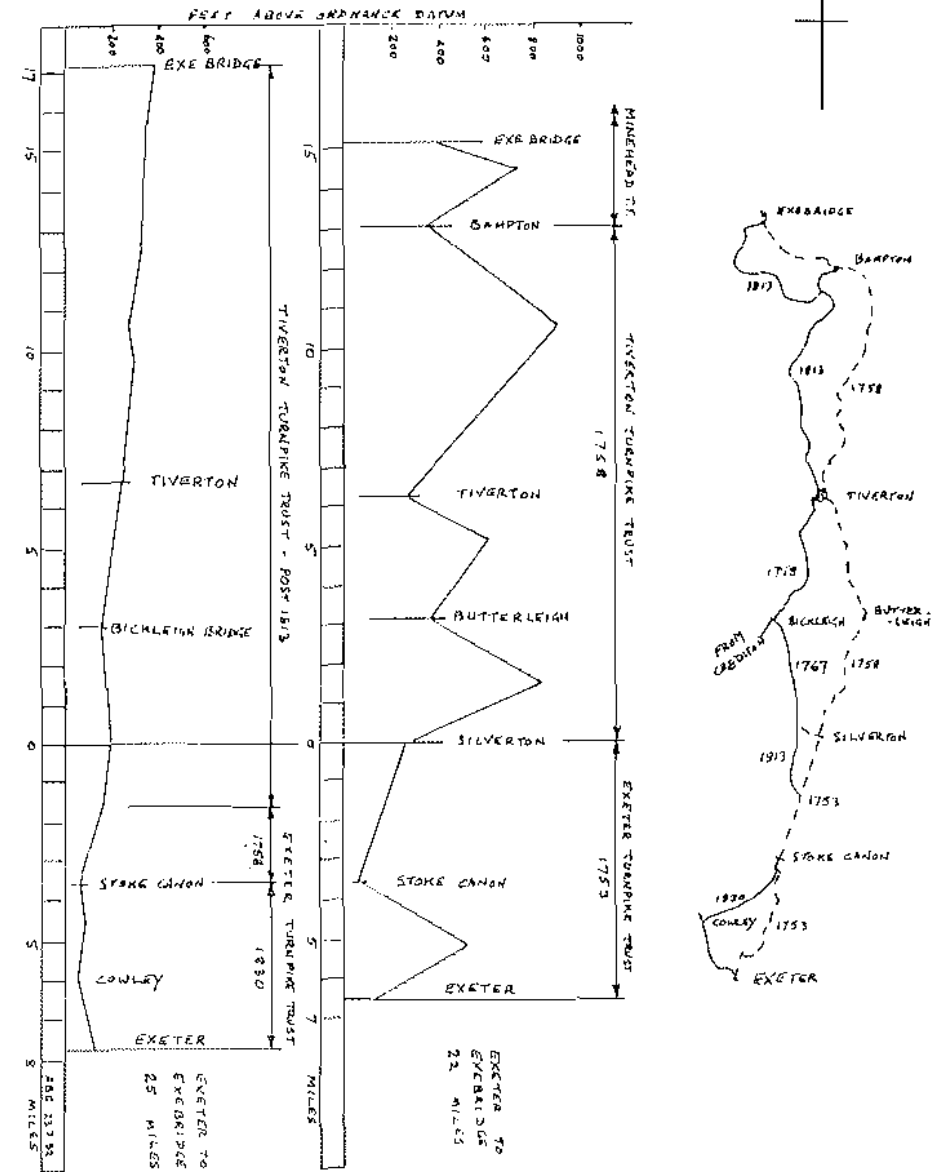
The Tiverton Trust listed some 73 miles of road in its Act of 1811.

1. From Lowman bridge through several parishes to the workhouse in Silverton.
2. From Hunts House thro' Halberton, Holcombe Rogus to Whiteball.
3. From the north-east of Leonard's Moor on route 2 through Willand to Cullompton.
4. From Exeter Hill Foot thro' Halberton (parish?) to the White Hart, Cullompton.
5. From Burrough Corner, Halberton, to Burnaford or Bunnivals Cross.
6. From the Hoop and Ball, West Exe, thro' Cadbury to Crediton Forches, Crediton.

7. From Wellbrook bridge, Tiverton, thro Calverleigh, Loxbeare to Crusey House in Rackenford.
8. From the Blue Bottle, Calverleigh, in route 7, to the smith's shop at the west end of Templeton hill beyond the brook in the road from Tiverton to Witheridge.
9. From Pennypark, Tiverton in route 7 to Grubeare bridge.
10. From Colleyhouse, Tiverton in route 7 to Worthy bridge.
11. From the Bampton Inn, Tiverton over Bampton Down to Bathram bridge, Bampton.
12. From Bickleigh bridge Cross over the bridge to the Swan Inn, Silverton.
13. From Bickleigh Wood Cross in route 6 by Bickleigh Court and Dandilands to Ford Village Water, Thorverton.

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6. DRO, ETT 2/5, 2.6. 1830



*Diagram showing the savings in ascents and descents achieved by the valley route between Exeter and Exchudge over the original one.*

## THE LONG BRIDGES OF NORTH DEVON

D. L. B. Thomas

Of the six bridges in Devon named 'Long' only two, both in north Devon, could still be described as long. One crosses the Torridge in Bideford and, not far away, the other crosses the Taw in Barnstaple. The bridges are very similar in construction and both have been widened on a few occasions. Bideford's bridge is the longer of the two, being 677 feet (206.34m) compared with that of Barnstaple, which is 520 feet (158.49m). Both the present structures were probably preceded by timber bridges.

The Long Bridge of Bideford is a 24 arch bridge that has been widened on four different occasions. The abutments and piers are of roughly coursed random rubble sandstone, the piers having triangular cutwaters with blunt noses and founded on boat shaped 'starlings'. The original arches are Gothic in shape and built in a single order without chamfers. The first widening was carried out on either side of the bridge by spanning between the cutwaters with segmental arches and additional width was obtained by means of concrete corbels supporting concrete beams on which parapets of squared coursed rubble have been built. Spans of the arches vary between 11 feet (3.35m) and 26 feet (7.92m) and the width of the piers between 9 feet (2.74m) and 12 feet (3.66m).

The remains of Roman artefacts have been found on either side of the Torridge and Taw estuary – at Clovelly Dykes and Countisbury, for example – and it is not impossible that Roman engineers would have built a timber trestle bridge, similar to Caesar's Rhine Bridge<sup>1</sup>, to supplement a ford near the site of the present Long Bridge. The first evidence of the existence of the bridge is contained in the accounts of the executors of Bishop de Stapeldon's will dated 6 August 1326<sup>2</sup> which includes a bequest of 'ponti de Bydeforde, xls.' (£2). The name 'Long Bridge' appears for the first time on 5 December 1396<sup>3</sup> when Bishop Stafford made a grant of indulgences to those contributing to the repair of the bridge. Perhaps the Church became concerned about the cost of maintaining a wooden bridge across the unpredictable waters of the estuary for, on 25 April 1426<sup>4</sup>, Bishop Lacy made a grant of 40 days indulgences to those contributing towards 'reparacionem, construccionem sive emendacionem pontis de Bydeford' and, on 24 May 1437<sup>5</sup>, again making use of the word 'construction', he made another grant of 40 days indulgence. Money appears not to have been exactly rolling in because his next grant, on 28 June 1444<sup>6</sup>, stressed the need for a new bridge by use of the words 'novum construccionem'. The Pope must have been told of the dangerous state of the bridge for, on 7 April 1459<sup>7</sup>, he wrote, when granting indulgences specifically for the two bridge chapels, that he had learned that 'under the bridge of Bideford in the diocese of Exeter there flows a very rapid and dangerous river, in which on account of the faulty structure of the said bridge, which is of wood, many persons have been drowned'. Leland, in 1543<sup>8</sup>, recorded that 'The bridge at Bedeforde upon Tyrege is a very notable worke, and hath xxiiij. arches of stone, and is fairly waulid on eche side'. The bridge, therefore, was wooden in 1459 and masonry in 1543 but this age envelope can be narrowed further. Pearse Chope, in 1924/25<sup>9</sup>, described and illustrated with a photograph a seal attached to a deed dated on 11 June 1474. This seal depicts a part of the bridge with arches and substantial piers that could not be mistaken for a timber structure. Construction of a bridge of this magnitude would probably have taken most, if not all, of the fifteen year period from 1459 to 1474.



*Bideford long bridge: upstream face showing original Gothic arches; 1795-1810 widening by segmental arches between the cutwaters and 1924-1925 widening in reinforced concrete.*

The foundations of this bridge were made by tipping stone on the river bed, probably in places where there was a rock bed at a reasonable depth, something that could be determined by probing with long rods. During widening carried out during the nineteenth century it was discovered that the masonry of the fifteenth century bridge had been built so as to enclose the earlier timber bridge. Sufficient of the timber was extracted from the masonry during this widening to enable a reconstruction of the timber bridge to be made and photographed<sup>10</sup>. When built the width between parapets was about 9 feet (2.74m) with refuges for pedestrians over the cutwaters. Widening was first carried out in 1795<sup>11</sup>, when an agreement was made between a Mr Kendall and the feoffees to provide an extra 4 feet (1.22m) between the parapets over the middle four arches for the sum of £295. This contract was extended over a further two arches. In 1807, the width over four more arches was carried out by a Mr Rowland Moase at £60 per arch followed by another five at £50 per arch. Finally, in 1810, the remainder of the bridge was widened by James Green at a total cost of £2,130.

In 1853<sup>12</sup>, at a joint meeting between the bridge feoffees and the Town Council, it was agreed that, because of the accidents that had occurred caused by the narrowness of the bridge, it should be widened as soon as possible. A scheme for widening to 35 feet (10.67m) was put out to tender and as only one, at £7,897 8s 0d (£7,897.40), was received it was decided that a better option might be to build a new bridge. A number of designs for a new bridge from different engineers, including the then County Surveyor, Thomas Whitaker, were considered and rejected. Finally it was decided to

go back to widening the existing bridge and the consulting engineer, a man called Page, produced a scheme to increase the width between parapets from 13 feet (3.96m) to 23 feet 9 inches (7.24m) by building out stone corbels on to the extreme edges of the cutwaters and spanning between the corbels with steel plate girders and cast iron parapets. Page's estimate for the work was £3,500 but the actual cost of the work, completed in 1867, turned out to be nearly £6,000. In 1924 – 25, all the cutwaters were rebuilt, the steel and cast iron widening removed and the footway structure rebuilt in reinforced concrete to give a width between parapets of 30 feet (9.14m). Traffic volume on the Long Bridge was reduced in 1987 when the 650 metre long prestressed concrete Torridge Bridge was opened to traffic.

Superficially similar to its companion over the Torridge, Barnstaple's Long Bridge differs in detail. It has 16, rather than 24, spans and the arches, although also Gothic in shape, are built in two orders each about 20 inches (506mm) deep. The downstream side has been widened by segmental stone arches spanning between the cutwaters and the upstream side by means of concrete arches with pseudo voussoirs of stone. The spans of the core arches varies between 22 feet 6 inches (6.86m) and 18 feet 4 inches (5.59m). The length over barrel of core bridge is 12 feet (3.66m) so that the width between parapets of the original bridge was probably, like the Bideford bridge, 9 feet (2.74m).

It has been said that the Romans built a bridge, probably with masonry piers and a timber deck or possibly a simple trestle structure, about 25 metres upstream of the Long Bridge. There may have been a bridge before that, carrying a ridgeway that con-



Barnstaple long bridge: upstream face as widened with segmental concrete arches in 1961-1963.

nected towns in the north - west corner of Devon<sup>13</sup>. The first documentary evidence of a bridge is in a local inquisition, taken at Barnstaple around 1280<sup>14</sup>, referring to the 'brigge and highway' and to the 'cawsey between the brigge and Stykelpath'. The river at that time, before embankments or 'banks' were built, would have been wide and could be crossed, except at very high tides, via a stone causeway from the bottom of Sticklepath Hill to a bridge of some sort and, probably, a short length of causeway to the Barnstaple bank. The name 'Long Bridge' appears for the first time in 1303<sup>15</sup>, when it was recited that a grant had been made by Alicia de Ackelane of a yearly rent of three pence to the 'Long Bridge of Barnestaple'. The executors of accounts of 28 June 1326<sup>16</sup> of Bishop Stapeldon's will includes a payment of 'xls' (£2) to the '*custodibus pontis Barnastopilie*' – the custodians, or keepers, of Barnstaple Bridge – and a further £2 for the repair of the bridge. In 1333<sup>17</sup>, William Rowe, William Ribild and John Conner were conveying stones in a boat to repair 'the Long Bridge of Barum' and 'wishing to cast out a great stone' foolishly balanced it on the boat's gunwales causing the boat to overturn and the death by drowning of the three workmen. On 24 May 1437<sup>18</sup>, Bishop Lacy made a grant of indulgences for those contributing towards the '*constructionem, reparacionem, sustentacionem et emendacionem pontis Barn*'. As with the Bideford bridge, Lacy's use of the word 'construction' must mean that it had been decided that a new bridge was needed. Leland (1543)<sup>19</sup> records 'the right great and sumptuous bridge of stone having 16 high arches at Berstaple'. That he was referring to the present bridge in an unwidened state is confirmed in 1545<sup>20</sup> by a description of the bridge in a letter written by the Mayor of Barnstaple, John Holland, authorising John Gerway to collect alms in Dorset for the maintenance of the Long Bridge and causeway. A map made of the town in 1684<sup>21</sup> shows a sixteen span masonry arch bridge with parapets and triangular cutwaters with refuges above, quite clearly the present bridge. In 1689<sup>22</sup>, the 'North Peere, called Maiden Arches of the great Bridge, built on wood, taken down and rebuilt in 3 weeks on arches; cost xxvi pounds.' 'Peere', in this case, means a horizontal walkway as in a pier out to sea, unlike the normal bridging sense of a vertical member supporting an arch or a beam. If the two words 'on' had been transcribed as 'of' then it would seem probable that the arches near the north bank, perhaps the three built between 1584 and 1589, had collapsed and had been temporarily replaced with timber beams, a fairly common practice in such circumstances.

It has been postulated<sup>23</sup> that, on the basis of the Inquisition post mortem into the death of the workmen conveying stone for repair of the bridge, that the bridge was built of masonry in 1303. This may well be so but it does seem unlikely that this bridge was the present structure. The stone may have been for the repair of the abutments or piers of a timber decked bridge, a very common form of construction from the Roman occupation until about the seventeenth century. Or the causeway, which was certainly of stone, may have loosely been referred to as 'the Long Bridge'. But the most convincing contra-evidence is Bishop Lacy's use of the word 'construction' in his grant of 1437: he would hardly have used this word to refer to a bridge already in existence. Also the combining of the two Long Bridges in one grant of indulgence suggests that they were in a similar state of disrepair, the remedy in each case being renewal.

Between 1782 and 1807, the bridge was widened in sections by spanning between the cutwaters on the downstream side. In 1834, the bridge was widened on the upstream side by spanning between the cutwaters with cast iron beams and substituting cast iron railings for the solid masonry parapets. The scheme was designed by James Green, in a private capacity not as the county surveyor, and the ironwork was

cast in the Neath Abbey Ironworks, near Neath in West Glamorgan. The most recent widening, started in 1961 and completed in 1963, involved extending the arches upstream in reinforced concrete.

Is it possible to decide which of the two bridges is the older? Not really. Neither has a date tablet commemorating its construction and both have structural characteristics that could have been incorporated at any time during the period from 1437 to 1543. Sufficient to say that both are magnificent examples of medieval structures that have served their county, and country, in an exemplary fashion for about five centuries.

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## THE EARLY 'BALLOON CRAZE' IN EXETER

S. Bhanji

William Nation, a merchant and banker of Georgian Exeter, kept a personal journal, the second volume of which runs from January 1797 to the writer's death on 1 July 1831<sup>1</sup>. One entry records Mr Sadler ascending in a balloon of 75 ft diameter from Exeter's Castle Yard on 22 October 1814 and arriving near Newton Poppleford after a journey lasting forty-five minutes. On 7 September 1824 Nation noted that Mr Graham and Mr R. Cullum jnr took an hour and three quarters to travel by balloon from Exeter to North Petherton, some three miles from Bridgwater. For miles around Exeter the hilltops were covered with uncountable numbers of spectators and most of the shops in the city were deserted. Nation's other entry concerning ballooning is mentioned later.

Exeter did not escape the 'balloon craze' which began in France in 1783 when the Montgolfiere brothers launched a hot air balloon at Annonay on 5 June and a hydrogen-filled balloon designed by Jacques Alexander César Charles ascended from Paris on 27 August. Both flights were unmanned. The first passengers to travel by balloon were the sheep, cock and duck who took off from Versailles in one of the Montgolfieres' balloons on 19 September. Concern over the cock injuring a wing evaporated when witnesses testified to the sheep kicking it before take-off; and the first manned flight, by Jean-Francois Pilâtre de Rozier and the Marquis d'Arlandes, took place from Paris on 21 November in a Montgolfiere balloon. Debate over the relative merits of hydrogen and hot air were largely resolved ten days later when Jacque Charles and Aimé Robert carried out a higher and longer flight in a hydrogen-filled balloon<sup>2</sup>. A little over two months afterwards, Exeter saw its first balloonist. James Dinwiddie, an itinerant lecturer and one of the first to fly a balloon over London<sup>3</sup>, launched an unmanned balloon from the Castle Yard on 7 February 1784. The balloon was 4 ft across and carried a scaled-down platform similar to that which carried 'the two philosophers', presumably de Rozier and d'Arlandes. Although the take-off was a success, the balloon was blown over Exmouth Bar and lost<sup>4</sup>. The first manned flight from Exeter was on 19 June 1786. Despite subscriptions amounting to only £10, M. St Croix ascended in a 76 ft circumference hydrogen balloon to a height of some 19,000 ft. The balloon became overdistended and split, but St Croix was able to make a controlled descent and land on Farmer Whipple's field in Cadbury. He was promptly asked for 5 guineas for damaging the crops<sup>5</sup>. St Croix advertised a second flight hoping to recoup his losses, and intended releasing a sheep or dog in a parachute at 6,000 ft<sup>6</sup>. However, perhaps because of a lack of financial encouragement in Exeter, his next flights were at Salisbury and Plymouth<sup>7</sup>.

The Mr Sadler whose flight Nation noted was Windham Sadler, the younger son of James Sadler. Although John Sheldon, who later became a surgeon in Exeter, was probably the first Englishman to travel in a balloon<sup>8</sup>, James Sadler was the first English pilot, having taken off at Oxford on 4 October 1784<sup>9</sup>. The balloon used by Windham Sadler was capable of lifting 72 men and designed as a Corinthian Temple with a colonnade decorated with eighteen full-size figures. Also exhibited before the flight was the richly embellished nautilus-shaped car in which Sadler and a Miss



Tompson had ascended on George III's golden jubilee. Because of the wooded and irregular terrain, however, it was not used on the Exeter flight<sup>10</sup>. The inflation of the 'Aerostatic Temple' began at 10.30 a.m. in the Castle Yard, with the balloon placed over a lead-lined pit containing sulphuric acid and iron to produce the necessary hydrogen. After an embrace from his father, Sadler took off at around 1.20 p.m. When about a mile and a half from Exeter, he threw out an empty basket attached to a parachute. Sadler landed on Mr Tozer's land near Daddon Mills on the Otter a mile below Newton Poppleford. In doing so he terrified two farm labourers who believed the balloon was full of men<sup>11</sup>. The balloon sustained some damage, and Sadler had to announce that his flight at Plymouth on 24 November would not take place unless the sea was calm or there was an on-shore wind<sup>12</sup>. The ascent from Plymouth Citadel was a near disaster. A squall during inflation drove the balloon against the spikes around the statue of George II. Despite severe damage to his balloon, Sadler was determined to carry on. When his friends forcibly removed him from the car, the balloon shot into the air, eventually landing on Lifton Down<sup>13</sup>.

George Graham and his wife Margaret were among the foremost English aeronauts. They also had a reputation for hair-raising mishaps, probably due to the inconsistent quality of the coal gas used to fill their balloons. Too much air contaminating the gas could result in a dangerously low flight path<sup>14</sup>. It was Graham's intention to fly his balloon from Exeter on 24 August 1824 following a demonstration at Taunton<sup>15</sup>. The gas manufactured in Taunton was unsuitable, and so for the first time Graham had to rely on hydrogen alone. Unfortunately, due to the poor quality of the iron provided, it took two attempts to take off. This delay caused concern in Exeter, but it was soon announced that Graham would ascend from there on 7 September. During the inflation at the Castle, the audience would be entertained by 'the French Hercules' and the band of the 14th Light Dragoons<sup>16</sup>. Inflation with coal gas began the afternoon before the ascent. The semi-distended balloon was then brought to the Castle and hydrogen added. Graham allowed four hours for this second stage, but it took some ninety minutes more before the balloon was filled. After sending up two small pilot balloons, Graham and his passenger, Robert Cullum, the son of an Exeter printer, prepared to take off. On discovering the balloon was insufficiently buoyant, Cullum hastily threw out ballast. The grappling iron and line, the cork casing of the wicker basket and the barometer were also jettisoned. At around 4.20 p.m. the two aeronauts finally embarked on a flight which ended near North Petherton. The balloon bounced twice on landing, but was soon secured by boys from a nearby school<sup>17</sup>. Despite receiving £185 16s 6d at the Castle, £48 from tickets and an undisclosed sum from Cullum, Graham was out of pocket. A subscription fund was set up and this situation was soon remedied<sup>18</sup>.

The use of coal gas was pioneered by Charles Green<sup>19</sup>. Although not recorded by Nation, he appeared in the city in 1828. His first attempt, on 29 May from Webb's Yard in Paris Street, had to be aborted due to gas escaping from the balloon. With much apology and requests for financial support, the ascent was postponed to 5 June from Bonhay with a lady of Exeter as the hoped-for passenger<sup>20</sup>. Again there were problems with the gas supply. The balloon could not be adequately inflated and a Mr White of Countess Wear was forced to forego travelling with Green. The balloon was kept low because of the weather, and only a short flight was possible. During the descent, the balloon narrowly missed Woodbury church and Green had to extricate it from a tree before landing at Coombe Farm<sup>21</sup>. Undeterred, Green advertised a flight for Waterloo Day (18 June). He hoped to be accompanied by a gentleman of Exeter, and as before

asked for subscriptions<sup>22</sup>. At 8.00 a.m. on the chosen day, inflation began at the Bonhay gas works. Drawing gas directly failed to suffice and at 1.00 p.m. it was taken from the gasometer. Nonetheless, there was still not enough to lift a passenger and Mr White, this time described by some as of Sidbury, was again disappointed. During the flight, which ended near Broadclyst after a hasty descent due to the balloon becoming overdistended, a basket containing a cat was dropped by parachute. It drifted slowly downwards towards Heavitree and landed safely. This is more than can be said for a youth who fell off a bank of earth while watching the balloon being inflated and broke a leg<sup>23</sup>. The cat accompanied Green on his triumphant return to Exeter and its owner, Mr Playter, the Clerk of the Gas Company, was offered large sums for 'Miss Puss'<sup>24</sup>.

The early aeronauts who visited Exeter risked not only life and limb but also financial embarrassment. The daring of the third balloonist recorded by Nation was of a different nature. In the following transcription of the journal entry for 7 February 1814 Nation's spelling is retained, but the punctuation is modern.

A singular hoax was this day practised. A Doctor Gamble advertized a baloon to be launched from the Castle Yard on this day. Many hundreds having assembled in the Castle and many thousands in the suburbs, the time also for the exhibition having elapsed for upwards of an hour, a general discontent prevailed. The doctor being urged to go for his baloon left the yard for that purpose, but a suspicion being excited, he was accompanied to his lodgings where he produced a kind of paper bag with which he proceeded to the Castle and which he proposed filling with gas generated with wetted straw. By accident or design the bag took fire. The Doctor was seized and the money he had collected taken from him, amounting to about £20. The Mayor out of this Sum paid for his lodgings etc., gave him a few pounds to leave the town and presented the balance to the Eye Infirmary.

The advertisements placed by Gamble announced that an elegant balloon and car would ascend from Exeter Castle Yard on 3 February. The balloon, described as being about 10 ft high and 18 ft in diameter, 'will rise to various heights and, weather permitting, should be visible for twenty miles. Admission will cost 1/-, or 6d to the lower part of the Yard'. However, owing to the Castle being otherwise required on the appointed day, the flight had to be postponed until 7 February<sup>25</sup>. Nation's private account is generally confirmed by those published. The *Flying Post* and the *Gazette* added that some attempt was made to fashion a balloon out of the paper bag, the latter stating that it would probably have taken off had it not caught fire. On the other hand, it was so badly designed and constructed as to make the promised high ascent impossible. According to the *Flying Post* only the intervention of the constables prevented Gamble being assaulted, and the *Gazette* reported that the magistrates and the doctor had to shelter in the Castle Grand Jury Room while his fate was decided<sup>26</sup>. The account in the *Western Luminary* is sprinkled with outrage and sarcasm. However, it referred to the 'balloon' catching fire when somebody threw something at it and stated that the law left the authorities with no choice but to deal leniently with Gamble.

Nation's account of the use of wetted straw to provide the gas was not reported in the press. Joseph Montgolfiere stated that burning straw produced a particularly effective form of 'rarefied air', but in Gamble's case it may have been the only material to hand. He apparently made no attempt to add rotting meat or old shoes as the

Montgolfieres had at Versailles<sup>28</sup>. Whether Gamble was a sincere but incompetent balloonist, a fraudster or possessed a naïve sense of humour will probably never be known.

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## MINING IN ILSINGTON

Bill Ransom

### Geology

The north-western area of Usington parish is characterised by the intrusion in carboniferous times of igneous material into the surrounding sedimentary rock. Granite tors and outcrops are evident: Haytor Rock is the best known example and lies just inside the parish boundary. Most of the parish is covered, however, with the carboniferous series known as the culm measures. Here rocks of Devonian and Carboniferous age have been affected by earth movements. A dominant feature is the Usington fault, the plane of which runs in a north-west to south-east direction extending at least from Ramshorn farm to Green Lane on the northern boundary. This, and the associated thrust faults known as the Narracombe and Silverbrook thrusts have resulted in lower culm measure cherts resting on upper Devonian slates. Such cherts have been quarried in the past for roadstone at the Ramshorn Down, Lenda Wood and Rora Down quarries. The principal industrial significance, however, has been the effect of the igneous intrusion. This has resulted in minerals crystallising out from fluid form into cracks and smaller fissures caused by earth movements to form the veins (lodes), which attracted the attention of miners some 300 million years later. The minerals mined were mainly of tin, iron, lead, zinc, copper and manganese. In a simple system of deposition tin would be underlain closely by the granite, with the metamorphic aureole surrounding this containing the other metals in an order depending upon their temperatures of crystallisation, but erosion, later earth movements and different stages of intrusion and so different stages in mineralisation have led to patterns of variation and complexity.

### Tin

The most productive tin mine was the Atlas mine, (SX 778762), near Lewthorne Cross. Two main shafts were driven: Sarl's which went vertically to 20 fms passing through an ironstone bed at 10 fms and White's, which today lies in a private garden. White's was the deeper and driven vertically to 30 fms passing through a lower ironstone bed at 25 fms. These shafts, and cross cuts from them passed through three tin lodes, South, Warren's and White's. Levels – horizontal tunnels – were driven at depths of 10, 20, 25 and 35 fms the longest being that at the 25 fm depth which ran for some 80 yds north-west to south-east.

A first sale of black tin, that is tin ore ready for smelting, was recorded in 1860 with small amounts in the region of 4 tons in 1862 and in 1863. Tin mining then seems to have ceased temporarily in favour of iron but was resumed; in 1890 a peak production of 19.10 tons of black tin was achieved when total employees numbered forty-five of whom twenty-seven worked underground. In 1891, 14.30 tons of black tin were mined but thereafter production and employment fell sharply and by 1903 had effectively ceased although, under the name of the Albion mine, there was a small activity in 1913.

Sigford Consols and Smith's Wood mines were contiguous and first opened in 1859 in search for copper. This followed the discovery of copper ore during the exploration of old workings. A shaft a little to the west of Sigford cottages, (SX 774751), and on the east side of the river Lemon was driven to a depth of 28 fms with levels at 14 and 18 fms. Adits with communicating air shafts were driven to the east. In the same year

but on opposite sides of the river Smith's Wood mine was explored with an adit driven westwards. The search for copper was unsuccessful but a tin lode was found. Browning's lode, named after the mine captain, was worked by means of a shaft, (SX 774747), driven to 20 fms with levels driven at 10 fms depth in an east-west direction. The lode was at least 20 ft wide; adjacent to it on the south side a second lode 3 ft wide was found. Browning's lode was driven westwards in open-cast working to the top of the hill but by then showed little tin content. These mines were active in the early 1860s but there are no records of outputs and operations ceased around 1864 when machinery and dressing plant were sold to the Bagtor mining company. The early optimism, not fulfilled, can be gauged from an order placed for a waterwheel capable of driving 24 heads of stamps, that is, 24 drop-hammers for crushing the ore.

Crownley Park, Bagtor and Hemsworthy were all part of the same mining sett. Crownley park lies in the general area SX 762762-767757 where extensive signs of typical old alluvial methods of mining are apparent. Many of the spoil heaps are the remains of activity by those generally known as the 'old men'. Just how long ago mining was undertaken may be judged by reference to a stannary court book of Ashburton dated 1684-1693. A specific entry dated 1690 for 'Croonley' states the bounds and includes in it the remark 'The East side Bound is by a greate Rocke by a little old Tywarke...' so clearly mining here well predated that year. An even earlier example is shown in the will of Hugh Bruseghe, vicar of Widecombe and Usington, dated 19 August 1532 who left to his nephew John Bruseghe 'a fifth part of my stannary called the Sanctuarie and the whole of my stannary called Swynepath to him and his heirs'.

An area some 110 yds wide and 70 yds long has been excavated around a small feeder to the river Lemon. Development in the early 1850s was by two adits driven to explore beneath the old open pits the higher one being known as Lord Cranstoun's named after the owner, at that time, of Bagtor manor. Only 16 tons of black tin apparently were raised and operations ceased in 1856.

To the west of Crownley in the general area SX 758758 to 762758 the Bagtor mine had three shafts: Western, Prosper and Quickbeam. A northern tin lode was opened by an adit driven some 160 yds to the east along the lode and meeting Quickbeam shaft 5 fms below the surface; the shaft extended a further 10 fms below the adit. Further lodes were opened up by an adit some 400 yds to the south-west of Quickbeam shaft and passing Prosper shaft 6 fms below surface. A further part of that lode was opened by levels driven from the bottom of Western shaft at 20 fms depth and 250 yds to the west of Prosper shaft. Dressing floors for the tin ore were in Bagtor wood below Bagtor cottages. By the end of 1860 only 25 tons of black tin had been obtained. East of Hemsworthy Gate at SX 744761 Old Engine shaft was driven to 28 fms in the development of the three lodes to the north and south of the Haytor to Widecombe road. An adit of the 'old men' was found at 10 fms; most of the lode above this level had been removed in the past. Several adits, shafts and trial shafts were dug and levels extended from the bottom of Old Engine shaft and at the 10 fms depth but output of black tin recorded between 1853 and 1855 was only 16 tons. Hemsworthy, Bagtor and Crownley park were connected by a light railway some 1.3 miles in length but traces are now impossible to identify with any certainty.

### Lead and zinc

Lead and zinc are known to have been mined at Silverbrook, SX789759, in the middle of the seventeenth century and work resumed in about 1757, the lodes then being worked to a depth of 15 fms below the adit level, the latter, presumably, being itself

well below ground level. Work appears to have been abandoned in a great hurry, doubtless due to flash flooding for the miners left many tools behind. That, at least, was the account given by an old man in 1852 living in the district who had heard it from his grandfather. About then working was resumed and on draining the mine the tools were found as predicted including two sets of wooden hand pumps. Two principal lead-zinc lodes 35 yds apart at the surface and trending north-east were developed by an adit some 610 m long and by two shafts. Engine shafts was vertical for 16 fms and thence followed the overhanging wall of Main lode to a total depth of 80 fms. A second shaft 120 fms south-east of Engine shaft was driven to 27 fms below surface and levels driven every 11 fms below surface to depth of 66 fms. By the depth of 80 fms it had been expected that the junction of Main lode and Western lode would have been reached but this was not so and the mine was abandoned. This was the deepest mine in Usington parish. From 1854 to 1856, 92 tons of lead ore are recorded as having been mined and 892 tons of zinc ore. 80 ozs of silver was also extracted. At its peak the mine employed 60 people: all the plant and machinery were advertised for sale at auction in December 1857. Spoil heaps and the remains of the pumping engine house are still visible.

### Iron

Haytor iron mine, SX 773771, is thought to have been operating in the sixteenth century: it can be dated with certainty from 1826. An ironstone lode essentially of magnetite ran north-west to south-east and was mined by opencast methods. Altogether, eight beds of ironstone were interspersed with schist, the total width of ore being 16 ft with the principal bed 8 ft wide. Near the centre of the open lode an old sinking was found which went to 7 fms depth, thought to have been dug in a search for tin. By 1875 the mine was developed from open-cast working by an adit dug to intersect the ore beds some 20 fms below the openwork. Three beds of ore 10 ft, 14 ft and 6 ft thick interspersed with the schist were found. Outcropping of the beds could be traced to the south-east for  $\frac{1}{2}$  mile towards Smallacombe mine. Production of iron was only recorded from 1858. The most productive years were 1880, (3,395 tons of ore); 1881, (3,300 tons); and 1882, (3,840 tons). The mine closed around 1884 but reopened early last century with sporadic production up to 1921. The adit exit can be seen clearly at SX 772773 and spoil heaps and entrances to old shafts, now filled in, lie in private property both sides of the road to Haytor Vale at SX 772770. It was around there that the road collapsed in 1880 and required 3,000 tons of spoil to fill the hole.

Some magnetite has been worked at the Smallacombe mine but the chief ore was haematite occurring above the magnetite in three nodule beds the nodules being coated with black manganese oxide. Known as Smallacombe Cutting the mine at SX 777766 was worked as open-cast and also by adits ventilated by several air shafts. Deep adit and Shallow adit had levels driven from them in a general north-west direction. The deepest shaft went to 15 fms. 73 tons of magnetite were obtained in 1868. The recorded output of brown haematite between 1865 and 1879 was in the region of 17,000 to 19,000 tons; timber and ochre were also extracted.

Rock Hill, Oldertown, Shotts and Hatherley were other small iron mines under exploration or in modest production in the 1860s and 1870s all contiguous with the Haytor and Smallacombe mines. Brown haematite was also mined at the Atlas mine to the extent of 1,300 tons in 1864 in addition to the tin already noted.

## Manganese

Manganese has been mined at Stancombe where an old shaft is situated at about SX 801739. The mine was drained by an adit brought up from a point some 300 yds north of Stancombe farm house. Data is scarce on the mine which seems to have been worked in 1879 and in 1880, when 40 tons of ore were sold, and possibly also during the First World War.

Manganese was also worked but to an unknown extent in Higher Brimley orchard, SX 799768. In 1967 subsidence in a field led to a modest exploration which revealed a tunnel about 5½ ft high and 3 ft wide. Drill fragments, pieces of candle and holes drilled into walls and plugged with wood were seen and also signs of a shaft. The tunnel was about 100 yds long and went into Brimley hill where it is probable that the shaft lies.

Mining activity in Ilington was at its peak in the middle of the nineteenth century. The 1861 census identifies fifty-one miners plus one mining clerk, one mining engineer and one engine driver. Some men shown simply as labourers may also have been employed at the mine: one was shown as twelve years old. While most were local men thirteen came from Cornwall. Labour figures for different mines should be treated with caution for many workers went from mine to mine. By the time of the 1891 census only seventeen were shown as working in the mines. Though nationally insignificant Ilington mines were an important local activity and, with quarrying, the non-agricultural activity of most importance.

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## AN AMERICAN FAMILY AT WAR-TIME INSTOW

Anthony Greenstreet

When war came in 1939 the Cotton family from Boston Massachusetts had lived in London for five years. Dick was managing director of British Rola Ltd whose Acton factory made vital precision pumps for RAF planes. His family comprised his wife Margaret, schoolboy son and two grown-up daughters, Alix and Martha. Alix married a Royal Navy pilot who was killed within a year while she was in hospital for the birth of their daughter Penelope. During the war Margaret kept an account of the family's experiences and subsequently wrote it into a record for her granddaughter Penelope. A copy is held by the Imperial War Museum.

With the fall of France in 1940 preparations were made to evacuate the British Rola factory to Bideford. A large garage was being converted to accommodate the factory and a new office building erected when in October an air-raid devastated many factories in Acton. British Rola survived, but was ordered to Bideford at 24 hours notice. Margaret Cotton described the transfer: "The night the factory personnel arrived in Bideford was probably the busiest night of the war for certain men and women of the town. The WVS bore the brunt of the work. They fed hundreds of people and did a marvellous job. For not only the factory workers travelled down from London, but their families came also. The train was so crowded, like most war-time trains, that people were standing jam-packed in the corridors. There had been no restaurant so hunger was added to the travellers' weariness. When Dick returned to the Inn at about 3 o'clock in the morning he was quite worn out but enthusiastic about the welcome that his workers and their families had received. "The town has been darned nice" he said, "The women were simply marvellous. No one went hungry. Those WVS workers - I take my hat off to them. They managed beans, eggs, bread and butter, cake, tea, etc. And the men helped in getting folks to billets. We've come to the right place all right".

The Cottons lodged at The New Inn, Bridge Street. Being well-off 'the sway-backed iron and brass beds, the cans of luke warm water for washing brought up, and the evil-smelling oil stoves' were not what they were used to; but, after endless London air-raids, they felt they had 'arrived in Heaven'. Moreover, they were impressed by the town's friendly atmosphere shown by the bustle and chatter in the covered Market Place opposite the Inn - with its 'tubs of butter and gay flowers; the stalls with fresh bread; the panniers of garden produce; the baskets of eggs; the nude chickens, composed with folded legs on clean white cloths; and fur-coated rabbits, asleep with their open eyes'.

After three weeks they moved into a large rented house, Springfield, at Instow with nine bedrooms and forty-two windows needing black-out screens. By American standards it was uncomfortable, having no central heating and hot-and-cold basins in only two bedrooms. But it had large grounds with walled fruit and vegetable gardens and, from a hill behind the village, gave long views up the Torridge towards Bideford.

With the house came the indispensable Smale - an excellent gardener who also cared for the family's chickens, pigs, dogs and horse, brought in the coal, 'and is almost always cheerful and pleasant'. With him came two good daily cleaning women. But the Cottons needed more staff, for their house was always full of guests - especially because of their commitment to the British and American Red Cross to put up officers

on leave or active convalescence. As the war progressed staff became even more difficult to get. In 1942 Margaret wrote: 'In spells we have a staff. That is Cook, House-Parlourmaid and Housemaid. Here, in England, domestic help is paid very little by American standards ... But suddenly there is a "call-up", and Ruby, the housemaid departs for the WAAFS. This is more of a calamity than it appears. For now cook wants to know who'll do the vegetables? Frieda, the house-parlourmaid, says it is not her job. What about her hands for serving at table? And what about the ironing? "It's not my place, M'am". That prim and precise and often final expression is heard eternally nowadays. And the replacements one acquires through the Local Domestic Bureau!!! Oh!... But, in spite of the domestic "misfits", I also have my share of "treasures" who create a real loss when the war transfers them to factory, field or Force.'

Entertaining officers began once Springfield was habitable. Towards the end of 1940, 'The Ox and Bucks Light Infantry are stationed at Westward Ho!, and among the officers are some ten or a dozen young men who like to drop in for a chat, a game of bridge, a sing song, and the inevitable whiskey and soda'. Margaret's daughters introduced them to pop-corn; 'When the girls stirred the popped the corn into treacle and then rolled the sticky mass into balls on a floured board, there were many willing helpers. Uniforms became dusty with flour, and the kitchen full of laughter'. She couldn't bear to have 'a house that doesn't seethe with people and babble', and Springfields bedrooms were usually full, 'Sometimes overnight, the sofa and wing chairs in the drawing room are occupied as well, and once several officers slept on the floor there, wrapped in blankets like papooses.' In summer she could look out of her bedroom on to the lawn 'almost any afternoon as I change for tea and discover one, two or three uniforms that were not there the last time I looked'. Some visits were less welcome, 'At odd hours the intense whir and frightening zoom of planes disturbs us ... as boys from the Drome "beat-up" the house. I don't like it! The girls find such practice complimentary. They wave from the lawn ... The morning Johnny Striebel streaked under the telephone wire, and hedge-hopped the lower garden fence and just crested the roof, I hung out of the window and shook my fist at him'.

Like everyone, the Cottons depended on the local bus service. 'The buses here intrigue us. They have an intimate quality in their dealings with those who ride in them and with the country homes whose doors they pass day by day on half-hourly schedules. The buses not only stop wherever one desires, even at one's own gate ... but deliver parcels and articles of all sorts. One can call up a shop in Bideford or Barnstaple, and ask for two lbs of sole to be put on the 10am bus, or a coal scuttle and two brooms to come out by the 4 o'clock. Even livestock is thus delivered. I have seen sedate hens and garrulous ducks, in crates, riding in state on the rear platform with the conductress ... Often the buses are met at the designated spot and the articles collected, and often, also, the conductress obligingly hops off with the parcel and delivers it to the door. Sometimes there will be an expectant figure waiting at the door or window, and then the bus merely slows down while the conductress heaves the box, or parcel, over the hedge into the garden. The 2d or 5d, as the case may be, which the bus company collects, is added to one's bill at the shop.' Gradually the buses became less dependable, 'The gas-producing trailers attached, to save petrol, are most unreliable. They give up entirely now and then. One often spends ages in a static bus in forced contemplation of the rural scene. Sometimes the gas trailers catch fire and then everyone gets out and waits for the replacement'.

Margaret cheerfully recorded many other inconveniences. Food was short; 'Here we live by the sea and for days there is only chopped skate to be had, red gurnet and

bowls of laver, a gummy seaweed-like mass of marine life that Devonians love when fried in blobs'. Milk, unpasteurised, came in bottles with nicked and jagged mouths. Early spring flowers were unbelievably expensive because, transport by rail being forbidden, Cornish growers arranged for their costly delivery by relays of pedal-cyclists extending even to London. Complaining to a Bideford draper about an incorrect bill, he retorted that was because her husband had recruited thirty of the shop's girls into his factory. She was also much struck by the relative primitive character of life in Devon. Hers was the only refrigerator in Instow, but the cook would not abandon using the morgue-like slate shelves in the larder; as a doctor's daughter, the arrangements in the improvised blood-donor clinic seemed extremely casual; many houses in Bideford in which British Rola workers were billeted had no baths, even though built as recently as 1929, and there were no public baths in the town.

Although there were hardly any air-raid alerts at Instow, there was evidence enough of the war. In 1942 she wrote: 'With Appledore (refitting and repair depot for the Royal Navy) just across our tiny bay, the flotilla of small ships up the river, landing operations along the beach with square-jawed leviathans that spew men and tanks upon the sands, a hospital ship at anchor in the middle of our view, we have not lost touch with the war. Also, there are mines. They explode with startling detonations that shake the window frames. Some of the sea mines are washed up in storms, one such blasting roofs and windows nearby. Land mines are tested and tried out on the open reaches at the entrance to our bay. Some of the planted mines along the coast have been trod upon by unwary visitors who miss the signs. There have been fatalities, among them a young couple - a sergeant on leave, with his fiancée down from London. Walking on the beach they failed to see the sign at the foot of a mined cliff. The guard fired his rifle in warning. But it is thought that the crashing waves overlapped the sound ... The golf course is ringed with barbed wire and surrounded by mines. Straying sheep are blown up with unsettling results upon the golfers' play. There is gun practice along the front. There are convoys of tanks and guns and RAF lorries and Red Cross ambulances on the narrow winding roads. The Bideford Hospital and its staff (where her daughters worked as VADs) are pushed to the limit with service cases. For the cliffs and beaches of the West Coast of England are used as battle training ground, and the accidents run from flesh wounds to broken necks. A torpedoed ship produces dozens of burn cases ... In the evening an armoured train shuttles up and down the railroad line along the coast at the foot of our hill. It looks incongruous against the soft and peaceful sunsets.'

By 1943 American soldiers predominated. 'Hundreds of Americans have taken over Woolacombe sands and cliffs as training ground for an assault course. The headquarters is adjacent to Mr Tomsette's factory, and the fields are full of tanks, "ducks", and jeeps. The confusion and explosion noises of almost constant manoeuvres are turning Woolacombe into a nightmare for residents and evacuees. Martha has met a lot of nice young officers ... They take her and Alix to the dances - those fabulous dinner-dances of an American Army HQ where the food is like ambrosia to people so long on rations ... They come over to Springfield - big, husky chaps ... bearing gifts of tomato juice, candy, cigarettes, and even a cake now and then'. However, Margaret recognised the American presence caused problems. 'The swaggering, boisterous antics of thousands of GIs bewilder Devonians. In the pubs the American soldier treats the English beer and whiskey-soda like soda-fountain or milk-bar drinks'.

With his factory employing hundreds, Dick Cotton became an important local figure but was often away in America. In his absence Margaret was called on to open the

Bideford Agricultural Show, the British Rola Sports Club, and the Barnstaple Relatives of Prisoners of War Club. She presented prizes at Barnstaple Girls Grammar School, and noted the girls' astonishment when she described how American students paid their way through university by taking menial jobs - 'The English are a very class-conscious people'.

Margaret and Dick were honoured guests of the Corporation on 17 July 1942 when the Freedom of Barnstaple was conferred on American ambassador Winant. They rode to the Guildhall in Lady Astor's car: 'In the Speakers' Gallery were Mr and Mrs Winant, the Mayor of Barnstaple and the many Lord Mayors and Mayoresses of Devon, their colourful robes and chains of office positively regal to us Americans. About the long table in the centre of the Guildhall, whereupon reposed the famous gold and silver plate of the Corporation, were ranged the Alderman and Burgesses, the latter in their blue robes and enormous blue velvet berets similar to the one Henry VIII wears in the Hogarth painting. The gathering of civil guests was well sprinkled with the khaki, the blue and the grey blue of the various services. Gold braid and decorations made small bright patterns in the tapestry thus presented, its border a mingling of American and British flags against the walls. ... When Mr Winant rose to speak there was a burst of applause. Then an expectant hush fell over the Guildhall'.

After the ceremony there was a snack in the Mayor's parlour where the Cottons had some cheerful exchanges with Lady Astor, 'She is a forthright and dynamic person. Although a Virginian by birth, there are no languid attitudes of the Southern Belle about her'. Then the party progressed to Broadgate House - a nursery for bombed-out children financed by the people of Barnstable, Mass - which was opened by Mrs Winant: 'she has an almost spirituelle smile, although often plagued by ... the devastating twinges of 'Tic Dolooureux.' Thence the party visited the inhabitants of the Penrose Almshouses and repaired for tea in Bromley's Cafe, 'as two regimental bands vied with each other'.

With the war's end, Margaret returned almost immediately to America which she longed to see after ten years' absence. Thus her journal records no regret at ending her five years' stay at Instow. But she took with her at least one example of sly Devonian humour: once, when motoring from Bideford to Exeter, she and Dick stopped at Newton St Cyres and asked a native why the cottages were coloured terra-cotta pink. Margaret noted the answer, 'It be camouflag, Sur, fur any Nazi plane 'at cooms. Her couldn't find us noo'.

### Acknowledgements

Every reasonable effort has been made by and through the Imperial War Museum to contact the copyright holder named in their archives, but without success. The co-operation of the Trustees of the Imperial War Museum for allowing access to the papers of Mrs Cotton is gratefully acknowledged.

The North Devon Library and Record Office, Barnstaple has kindly supplied a copy of a Bideford Gazette article of 3 July 1945. This describes the war-time operations of British Rola at Bideford. The factory established itself in Elliott and Sons garage and the showrooms of Rawle, Gammon and Baker. 60 original staff came from Acton and this gradually built up to 600. 400 were locally recruited men and women from very diverse peacetime occupations, working day and night shifts from 8am to 7pm and

5pm to 6am. When the article was written there was some expectation the factory might soon return to London.

## THE UFFCULME ARCHIVE GROUP

Peter Wyatt

Professor W G Hoskins did more than anyone else to raise the status of local history studies all over the country and many investigations must be traceable to his influence. Appropriately, it was a comment of his which led Robin Stanes to set up the Exeter University extramural class which generated our own work in the 1980s. It is well known that most of the Devon probate material was burnt in a fire-bomb raid on Exeter in 1942; but Uffculme was fortunate in having been made a peculiar of the diocese of Salisbury during the Reformation, in compensation for the loss of Great Bedwyn to Edward Seymour, and consequently its records were stored at Salisbury and are now held at the Wiltshire Record Office at Trowbridge.

Initially the object of the class was to transcribe a few of the surviving sixteenth and seventeenth inventories to see what light they could throw on farming, cloth-working, and household furnishings at that time. However, half a dozen of us became so enthusiastic that we extended the scope to cover *all* the extant inventories, wills, and letters of administration (up to at least the beginning of the nineteenth century) and any other documents which would help to fill out the picture. The members of the class who formed the group were Mary Fraser, Peggy Knowlman, Peter Newton and Margaret Tucker, (all of whom either lived in Uffculme parish or were born there), together with Robin Stanes and Peter Wyatt. We were soon joined by Priscilla Flower-Smith, who was working on the papers of the Sanfords, a family with interests in neighbouring parishes; and together we could all contribute something from our varied fields of experience. This small group could no longer be supported as an extramural class and so continued on a private basis with meetings at the members' houses and, since it was convenient to work largely from photocopies, we were grateful to receive some financial help from the Uffculme Local History Society towards their purchase. In 1988 that Society produced *Uffculme: a Culm Valley Parish*, which mainly covered the period after 1800 and so did not overlap our work though it gave us very useful background information.

While the transcription of the inventories was a general task, some material became the preserve of particular members. For example, when it was considered necessary to extend our coverage to the PCC records in London, Mary Fraser undertook all that work on her own. There was also a division of labour when it came to writing accounts of the aspects of life and industry in Uffculme revealed by our studies; and here we were glad to have a contribution from Malcolm Flower-Smith on the weapons listed in the inventories. Geoffrey Fraser and Charles Stokes also supplied some illus-

trations and photographs. In all, several hundred wills and inventories were examined, together with muster rolls, protestation returns, and lists of nonconformists, rates and taxes.

After over ten years, the results of this work were finally published in two books. One, entitled *The Uffculme Wills and Inventories*, became the 1997 volume of the Devon and Cornwall Record Society and contained most of the inventory transcriptions together with many of the will summaries (DCRS New Series, Vol. 40, obtainable at 7, The Close, Exeter). The second, *Uffculme: a Peculiar Parish*, was published privately in 1997 by the Archive Group and carried the remainder of the archive material and fourteen articles on farming, cloth-making, household goods, clothing and various other aspects of life in the parish from Tudor times onwards. (Copies are on sale in Uffculme at the Post Office and Caldharbour Mill). The two volumes are the same size, over three hundred pages each, and contain colour photographs and other illustrations. Sad to say, there was some urgency to rush the second volume through the press since Peter Newton, an enthusiastic and valued member of our group, was very seriously ill, though it is some comfort to report that he received a printed copy before he died.

We thought it worthwhile to give some account of the progress and outcome of this work, to show what can be achieved in local history along these lines by a very interested group. Few parishes can have had their archives covered quite so comprehensively. Similar groups elsewhere may like to know that a thousand copies of our companion volume were printed and priced at just £12 to cover costs. In the event a small surplus accrued from time to time and this financed a few reunion lunches for the group, some of whom had moved out of the district. Production expenses had been minimised by carrying out all the editorial work on a personal computer, on which the final format of both books was set up so that our printers, The Short Run Press of Exeter, could reproduce everything photographically, thereby avoiding a further stage of proof-reading. That means, of course, that the editor cannot escape responsibility for one or two typographical errors that slipped through!

## REVIEWS

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

**Devon and the Cinema**, by Gordon Chapman. Devon Books, 2000. 160 pages. Illustrated. £19.95. ISBN 1 85522 758 4.

Those who have heard Gordon Chapman speak will know that his many enthusiasms include the cinema and the county of Devon, his home for a number of years. This publication combines the two, and is the first to cover its subject in any depth. The general arrangement is chronological, beginning with the days of travelling showmen and films being shown in buildings more usually devoted to other purposes (1895-1914) and ending with the long period of declining audiences and cinema closures or conversions to different usage (1946-1995). In between, the development and decline of the cinema within Devon is well documented, particular attention being paid to the many picture-houses lost in Exeter and Plymouth to enemy action during the Second World War. Within each section the relevant towns are set out alphabetically. Although this makes the book an easy reference work to dip into much more will be gained, especially regarding the social impact of the cinema, by reading it from cover to cover.

The author draws on a variety of sources including year books and directories. The most interesting, however, are interviews with various cinema proprietors and their relatives. Such oral history can so easily and so often pass unrecorded. The book is well laid out and profusely illustrated, many of the photographs being taken by the author. A helpful bibliography is provided and the reviewer was pleased to find an index. Compared to some recent local history publications there are refreshingly few misprints. Unfortunately, the most obvious is in a chapter heading. Although it could cause eyebrows to be raised, it does not seriously mislead the reader, and strictly speaking is not incorrect.

This reviewer enjoyed reading about a neglected aspect of both Devon's and England's recent history and learned much. The book can be thoroughly recommended and deserves a readership far beyond Devon's cinema buffs. One abiding impression, however, is of how surprisingly little appears to be now known of many buildings which, if not existing in living memory, were well known to the previous generation. The reviewer hopes, therefore, that it will be some time before Gordon Chapman hangs up his notebook, tape recorder and camera. He hopes also that it will encourage others to pass on their reminiscences to the author.

S. Bhanji

**Totnes: a Thousand Years of History**, by Kristin Saunders. Totnes Museum Society for Totnes Museum Trust, 2000. 80pp. 9 b&w illustrations. £4.95. ISBN 0 9519689 1 2.

Rather than giving a chronological account of the town's story, the author has attempted to deal with various topics that have shaped the life of Totnes and in so

doing has generously acknowledged her helpers and given a bibliography of her sources. She has therefore looked at Totnes as a defensive structure, a trade and communications centre, a centre of worship and a place to live.

In 'Fortress Totnes' the author tells how Totnes owes its origin to its position on the ridge above the river Dart, being part of the system of fortified towns or 'burhs', devised by King Alfred to keep the Vikings at bay and founded by his son, Edward the Elder in about 909. There was never a Battle of Totnes, nor a siege of the castle, and Totnes escaped direct involvement in the Civil War, but the military history of the town notes that in the Second World War twenty-three minesweepers were built in yards along the Dart.

The chapter 'Merchants – The Path to Wealth' describes the need for a royal burh to have a mint and Saxon coins have been found in Northern Europe. Totnes slate has been found at Corfe and Sherborne. In 1225 a dam was built across low ground to give access to St Peter's Quay and a few years later a stone bridge was built across the Dart with a chapel to St Edmund at one end. The wool trade continued throughout the Middle Ages and was at its height in 1467 while tin was probably carried from the Stannary town of Ashburton to the River Dart. Later in her book the author mentions indulgences granted by Bishop Lacey and I am reminded that Bishop Stafford granted an indulgence for the construction of Staverton Bridge in 1413 and this would have secured the route from Ashburton to Totnes.

In 'Merchants – Ruin & Recovery' the disastrous effect of building a weir to power the town mills, thereby causing local flooding, brought legal claims for compensation that were beyond the resources of the borough. On a happier note the development of the Turnpike Trusts is mentioned, especially that of Totnes in 1759. It could be noted that the date of construction of over 2 miles of new road past Follaton can be placed from the Devon Quarter Sessions records with the building of Sandwell Bridge in 1825 and the construction of over 3 miles of new road to Buckfastleigh with the building of Emmett's Bridge in 1811. In the chapter on 'Public Health' we are reminded of the care taken of the poor through the years and in the supply of water, also that, curiously, the sewage works is upstream of the town.

'Faith & Works' develops the religious history, mentioning that in 1432 Bishop Lacey granted indulgences to those who contributed towards the funding and construction of the new church, St. Mary's, the building of which continued through the next two decades. In the nineteenth century the building of St John's, Bridgetown and the non-conformist churches is detailed.

'Vote! Vote! Vote!' tells us of the political developments through the years and in 'Conclusion' we read of Dartington Hall and the effect geographical location has had on the lives of the citizens of Totnes.

The arrangement of the chapters, the excellent illustrations at their head and the breadth of historical interest of the author makes this a very pleasant volume for a visitor or Devonian to read and can only be a welcome addition to the bookshelves of Totnes.

Brian George

### The West Country as a Literary Invention: Putting fiction in its place

By Simon Trezise. University of Exeter Press, 2000. xvi + 256pp. ISBN 0 85989 538 6 (paperback) 0 85989 537 8 (hardback). Price £13.99 (paperback) £42.50 (hardback).

A significant theme of academic local history in recent decades has been the identification within Britain of distinctive 'countrysides' more aptly described by the French word *pays* – regions larger than counties whose inhabitants were distinguished over long periods of time by some common economic, social and cultural characteristics, in part deriving from the particularity of geography and climate (see, C. Phythian-Adams, *Re-thinking English Local History* (1987), Ch. 3). The concept is complex and difficult, but the West Country may be claimed as such a *pays*, though there is considerable scope for more historical research to determine its boundaries and to identify and explain the underlying characteristics of its people over time.

But the West Country exists in the popular mind both as a present and as an historical entity and in the volume noticed here Simon Trezise examines both the contribution of literary writers to the concept of a 'West Country' and the historical validity of the region they have portrayed. Individual chapters are devoted to works of Charles Kingsley, R.D. Blackmore, Thomas Hardy, Sabine Baring-Gould, Virginia Woolf and the less well known Robert Hawker, but relevant references to other authors both illuminate the volume's themes and attest to the breadth of the author's scholarship.

Trezise convincingly demonstrates with clarity and in painstaking detail that certain authors were highly influential in creating the perception of a West Country that has held sway since Victorian times and in contributing to a sense of region and place. He tackles more obliquely the equally interesting question of whether this West Country is largely an imaginary entity or represents an authentic picture of an actual region, its topography, history and people, but succeeds in demonstrating that most of the authors examined drew on an intimate knowledge of regional topography and place-names and the oral traditions, dialects, folklore, customs and beliefs of the general population. Consequently many of their topographical descriptions authentically portray the physical nature of those places. And when their fiction is set in their own time or in times within the memory of those still alive, Trezise's contention that they provide significant insight into the nature of local communities and their everyday lives is plausible. Hardy's writings vividly portrayed the reality of rural life and Baring-Gould clearly understood that smuggling, however exciting in retrospect, derived from poverty and a scarcity of legitimate work. Similarly Charles Kingsley's poem, 'The Three Fishers', presents a powerful insight into 'a whole community struggling to make a living from the sea' (p. 104) no less real than might be provided by an historian's text.

On the other hand, although myth presented as history is not necessarily false but rather perhaps a romanticized version of a more complex reality, the historian must be more sceptical when a novelist deals with periods very remote from his own. While Charles Kingsley's portrayal of Elizabethan Devon will undoubtedly prevail, combining as it does myth and historical fact, it also distorts fact and is as much a reflection of the author's attitudes towards nineteenth century problems and developments as a description of the sixteenth century past. As Trezise explains, *Westward Ho!* tells us more about the 1850s than the 1580s.

Surprisingly, considering the theme of the book, the author makes no real attempt to delineate the topographical bounds of his West Country and indeed except for the



Exmoor of *Lorna Doone* and Hardy's Dorset the book is concerned entirely with the south-western peninsula of Devon and Cornwall. On the other hand a bonus is provided in the numerous entertaining and informative digressions from the central purpose of the book, which, it must be stressed, contains much more of interest than it has been possible to touch on here. The volume ends with a useful descriptive bibliography drawing attention to other works in this field.

W.R. Stephens

**Christmas in Devon** by Todd Gray. Published by The Mint Press 2000. 116 pages with illustrations. Price £9.99. ISBN 1-903356-03-2.

'Christmas comes but once a year...', and Todd Gray in the introduction to his anthology *Christmas in Devon*, tells us that celebrations over the years have taken so many forms that we cannot talk of a traditional Christmas. Happily, though, riddles found in Christmas crackers have changed little since 1897: 'what is always behind time?' – 'the back of a watch'. But times change and so do our expectations. The request in 'Tommy's letter to Santa Claus' of 'A humming top that I can spin, A desk to keep my treasures in' would seem uncool to a child in 2001.

The anthology begins with an intriguing account of the visit to Exeter at Christmas 1295 of King Edward I and his queen who came at the request of the bishop to investigate the murder of the precentor. It ends with a wonderfully ethereal piece by someone who in his imagination makes the whole cathedral come to life to herald 'the peace of Christmas dawn' in 1942.

Towns and villages throughout the county are well represented in the account of the various pastimes and customs which time has hallowed and scribes have recorded. Carols everywhere were usually well received, but in Dartmouth the inhabitants were surprised at the laxity of the police in permitting a mob of half-drunk sailors and others to wander the streets singing their vulgar songs under the pretext of carolling. The custom of wassailing the apple trees either on Christmas Eve or Twelfth Night Eve, and mummers celebrating the exploits of St George are frequently recorded, as are parties, elaborate or otherwise, for rich and poor.

Pantomimes were performed then as now with topical references. A 'gooding' at Crediton in 1875 where the worthy squire welcomed his guests 'with a smiling countenance and a bag of money' gives the flavour of Christmases past. *The Devon Times* of 1874 warns against the wish for a white Christmas with the injunction that snow-falls might not be as well received in the dwellings of the lowly as in the homes of the rich. Christmas stories are also plentiful. The tale of the meeting of Elsa and Jack Cameron under St Stephen's Bow in Exeter, and the subsequent development of their love, may be told in an old-fashioned and sentimental style, but who cares? There is a lovely and happy ending.

There are little gems that must not be overlooked. On every page there are dated snippets, often useless, sometimes funny, sometimes just jogging the memory and producing a smile because of casual remembrance of something past. For instance, in 1817 a swindler who travelled under the name of Hoare of 'a dark complexion, chubby faced and weak in one eye, recently left Stoke Canon owing money to the landlord of the public house'. In 1818 there was dense fog throughout Devon, and in 1943 Tyrone Power featured in *Song of Fury* at 'The Cinema' in Holsworthy on Boxing Day.

On a more serious and patriotic note, in 1942, the Victory Club, a group of Payhembury girls, sang carols 'to buy a life-saving jacket for the Navy'.

This anthology has been meticulously researched and compiled by Todd Gray, and such an evocation of Christmas will remind readers of pleasurable happenings and occasions which create good feeling and fellowship at this festive season.

Alec Robertson

**Devon and Cornwall airfields in the Second World War** by Graham Smith. Published by Countryside Books, Newbury, Berkshire, RG14 5DS. 2000. 288 pages including bibliography and index + location map and numerous monochrome photographs. £12.95. ISBN 1 85306 632 X.

This is one of a series of books on the origin and use of English airfields during the Second World War. The first chapter traces the history of flying in Devon and Cornwall from Claude Graham-White's six mile flight from Pezance in 1910, the constitution of the Royal Flying Corps in 1912, the formation of the Royal Air Force in 1918 and the subsequent formation of Fighter, Bomber and Coastal Commands and the Fleet Air Arm with associated units such as Air Sea Rescue and the RAF Regiment. At the start of the Second World War the only operational Service station in the two counties was RAF Mountbatten near Plymouth. Between 1939 and 1945 many civilian and private aerodromes were requisitioned and thirteen new wartime airfields were built, a major civil engineering programme in itself. Airfields (an American term that replaced the British pre-war 'aerodromes') in Devon were Bolt Head, Chiverton, Dunkeswell, Exeter, Haldon, Harrowbeer, Mount Batten, Okehampton, Roborough, Upottery and Winkleigh, while those in Cornwall numbered eleven.

The building of each of the airfields is described, as are the types of aircraft that flew from it. Exeter, for example, was a municipal airfield opened in 1937 and was taken over by the RAF on 14 September 1939 with a batch of obsolescent aircraft, such as Fairey Battles, Vickers Wellesleys and Handley Page Harrows, to engage in experimental work for the Royal Aircraft Establishment. The first combat machines to use Exeter were Hawker Hurricanes, outstanding aircraft designed by Sydney Camm that operated in a variety of roles. These were followed by Mitchell's beautiful Spitfires, Swordfish torpedo biplanes, Hawker Typhoons and Tempests and de Havilland Mosquitoes and Bristol Beaufighter night fighters.

Roborough was set up as a municipal airport in 1931 and managed internal services to a number of cities as well as flights to the Scillies and to Jersey. The Admiralty requisitioned the airfield at the outbreak of war although Swordfish had been in residence before this. Gloster Gladiators, the last of the RAF's biplane fighter, were stationed here in 1940 and were gradually replaced by Hurricanes and Spitfires.

Winkleigh was destined to become something of a Cinderella station. It was planned in 1939 but, because of poor sub-soil and drainage, was not handed over to the RAF until 1 January 1943 and then with the runways covered in mud. Coastal Command decided that it had no operational use for the airfield and Fighter Command took it over with a handful of airmen and no combat aircraft in February of that year. Early in October it was temporarily handed over to the USAAF which used it as a base for D Day training on the north Devon coast. The remains of one of the runways and the control tower can still be seen from the road between Down St

Mary and Great Torrington.

This book records the contribution made by the Devon and Cornwall airfields and the aircraft using them to three major operational roles: the Battle of Britain, the U-boat war in the North Atlantic and the defence of Plymouth and its important naval dockyard as well as numerous other support roles, such as, for example, fighter pilots' skill in dealing with Hitler's *Vergeltungswaffe* or Revenge weapons – the V1 and later V2 rockets. The author clearly has the depth of knowledge of the subject to enable him to interpret the results of what must have been considerable research. This book of recent history is very readable and – dare one say it – may well provide the luxury of nostalgia to readers who lived through the last war.

*D L B Thomas*

**A History of Devon**, by Robin Stanes. Chichester: Phillimore. 2000. 144pp Illustrated. £15.99. ISBN 1 85067 092 4

Robin Stanes, a co-founder of the Devon History Society and a frequent contributor to *The Devon Historian*, is, indeed, an informed enthusiast for all things Devonian, past and present. His well-received *A History of Devon* from the earliest times in Phillimore's *Darwin County History* series (1986) has gone deservedly into a second edition. The first was clearly based on wide and deep reading and benefited from discussions with fellow workers in the field, some of them sadly no longer with us. (The benign shadow of W.G. Hoskins flickers across the pages). It all made for a very attractive volume, well abreast of the state of knowledge and of approaches of the time. The new edition goes on to draw on the extensive work which has been done since, in particular 'the immense contributions' made by *The Maritime History of Devon* and the vast *Historical Atlas of the South-West*, both appropriately published by the University of Exeter. Stanes also acknowledges how Mark Stoyke and Todd Gray, *inter alia*, are tightening our grasp on Devon in the early modern period, notably during the difficult 1640s when fierce conflicts could yet be characterised by the Devonian parliamentarian, William Waller ('William the Conqueror'), as 'a war without an enemy'. All this enhances our knowledge and understanding of the county's history but also our appreciation of its complexity. Local history is really never trivial history. Significant absorbing things are always going on down there deep among the grass roots. Stanes's own special interest lies in farming, seen as vital an element as the sea in the development of an entity with a complex topography confronting, like Spain and France – both important in Devon's story – two dividing and yet uniting stretches of blue water. The role of commerce and industry, too, is pursued assiduously here through what was done by and what was done to 'busy, crafty, subtle tanners', 'the roughest and most mutinous men in England', (where is their like today?), and weavers, shearmen, priests and politicians who between them, groups and individuals, made Devon the rich pulsating shire it was until well into the last quarter of the second millennium, with a felt impact on national, indeed, international history.

Stanes concludes his copiously illustrated overview on an elegiac note, remarking how developments over the last century and a half particularly have pushed us on to the periphery of national growth. It is certainly difficult running through this record of a once bustling 'industrious, troublesome and often hazardous past' to avoid mere nostalgia, and to become even a little depressed, surely not a natural condition for

folk, born and bred here or incomers, enjoying life in these delectable parts. But historians do know by experience that the unexpected lurks round every corner, and future Staneses might yet find themselves diagnosing a revival.

*Ivan Roots*

**Liberalism in West Cornwall: the 1868 Election Papers of A. Pendarves Vivian, M.P.**

Edited with an introduction by Edwin Jaggard. Published by the Devon and Cornwall Record Society, available from the Administrator, Devon and Cornwall Record Society, 7 The Close, Exeter, EX1 1EZ, 2000. 1vi + 154 pages, notes and index. £15. ISBN 0 901853 42 9.

This book consists of letters to and from A. Pendarves Vivian in the period immediately before and after the 1868 election, with a detailed introduction. The material includes details of election expenses and tables showing the political complexion of individual parishes in West Cornwall, as presented by Liberal Party workers of the time, in an uncontested election.

The introduction sets the scene, explaining the political landscape of the constituency of West Cornwall in the nineteenth century, and traces Vivian's life and political career. Dr. Jaggard explains the Liberal dominance in West Cornwall in the nineteenth century and shows the gradual shift of influence from great landlords to the wealthy middle-class entrepreneurs like J.M. Williams. He points to the contrast between the towns, where flagrant corruption and intimidation of voters were common, and the county elections. In the latter there were too many voters to bribe or intimidate, so subtler influences had to be brought to bear. Landowners such as Lord Falmouth were still very influential, as the correspondence shows, and the book also demonstrates the importance of Methodism in politics of the far west. The introduction stresses the vital importance of an efficient party structure, in particular with reference to the registration of voters. The weakness of the Conservatives in this respect is shown to have undermined their electoral chances.

Vivian was of Cornish descent but was himself resident in south Wales, where he managed the family's copper smelting works. Both the introduction and the letters stress the problems caused by Vivian's non-residence. His backers and party workers spare no effort to bring him to the attention of the voters and to make him seem involved in local society. The letters fall into three sections. The first are concerned with Vivian's adoption as Liberal candidate for West Cornwall and the possibility of a Conservative challenge. The next group is concerned with the registration of voters and finally, after the unopposed election, the settling of accounts and Vivian's introduction as MP into West Cornwall society. The letters show the network of wealthy families where the wives such as Lady Falmouth and Mrs. Williams play an important role in organising and soliciting support. We can follow the energetic work of local Liberals, mostly professional men, in drumming up support and soothing personal sensitivities. There are tantalising glimpses of Cornish society, especially in the final letter where Vivian is urged to attend, for example, meetings of the Royal Cornwall Polytechnic Society, and to contribute a prize to the Volunteer Association. Much of the correspondence is in the form of telegrams, often several in one day, which gives a great sense of the urgency of the whole situation and the speed of communication at

the time. The power of the local press is also vividly demonstrated.

Dr. Jaggard gives a most interesting insight into the local politics and society of mid nineteenth century Cornwall. He shows that uncontested elections were not without conflict, and offers a useful comparison to borough elections. In notes after each letter Dr. Jaggard identifies the people mentioned and places them in context. It is a pity that so few of Vivian's own letters have survived, so it is difficult to gain an impression of his personality. A map of West Cornwall showing the location of places mentioned would have been helpful, as would photographs of the principal protagonists.

This is a book that adds to our understanding of nineteenth century political life and manoeuvring and as such should interest readers beyond the confines of Cornwall and Devon.

*Kristin Saunders*

**The evolution of the fishing village: landscape and society along the south Devon coast, 1086-1550** by Harold Fox. Leopard's Head Press, 2001. xviii + 208 pp. incl. 11 figures (incl. maps) and 6 tables, also 15 illustrations on sep. pages. £13.50, obt: Explorations, 5 Salisbury Road, Leicester LE1 7QR. ISBN 0 904920 43 7

This work, the first full-length study of medieval fisheries for any stretch of British coastline, is one of a new series of 'Leicester Explorations in Local History' that are intended to open up new research on novel themes, accessible to both academic and local historians, and in attractive style. The author, who is Senior Lecturer in English Topography at the Department of English Local History in the University of Leicester, is one of the Devon History Society's past presidents. In his preface he acknowledges many who have assisted in his study including Kenneth Smith whose clear and informative maps enhance the reading.

Despite some opinions that there was little to be found about medieval fishing on Devon's coasts, in his investigations Harold Fox discovered an emerging picture of Middle Ages activity, sourced notably from papers of coastal manors that showed such details as income to lords and matters of local dispute.

In considering the coastline, various related establishments are discussed. Port towns also associated with fishing are noted, such as Dartmouth, Sutton (Plymouth), Teignmouth and Topsham. Cellar settlements, comprising inland stores complementing storage huts on a beach, are explained, exemplified by Coombe Cellars as the station for inland Coombeinteighhead. Regarding fishing villages well known in later times, manorial surveys have revealed indications of earlier origins. Quays, both riverine and maritime, are considered, many of the former, at least, dating from the thirteenth or fourteenth centuries, and often built to augment the landlord's income as commercial development advanced.

References to Devon's fisheries in Domesday Book are noted, as is the fact that some parishes had detached coastal portions, as in the cases of Haccombe with Combe, and Kenton, probably to provide fishing access. A share of tenants' fisheries, either in cash or kind, was taken by the lords, some of whom also developed direct management. Eighteen species of fish caught are listed, including conger, hake, her- ring, ling and salmon. There are references to seine nets, operated from boats or shore, and from the sixteenth century also tuck nets or drag nets, and stake-fixed nets for trapping the fish.

Evidence indicates a huge consumption of fish in medieval times across all social groups, especially in Devon with its high urban population. In some cases lords instituted fish markets. Quantities of fish were taken farther inland by packhorses, also carried by sea, and Exeter became a distributive centre for the trade.

Fishing on rural manors became largely a by-employment among farmers. Three places: Woodbury, Kenton and Stokenham, where rare types of source material have survived, are detailed. Housing for extra hands was sometimes provided by constructing cottages near farmhouses, or by establishing early fishing stations such as – in Stokenham – Beesands and Hallsands, originally called Beason Cellar and Hall Cellar.

While a few cellar settlements, such as Starcross, survived as such into the seven-teenth century or later, a transition from cellar settlement to fishing village proceed- ed at many places. With a growing population, and a safer coastline following the end of the Hundred Years War in 1475, habitations developed nearer to the shores. At the same time prosperity was increasing, Devon's output of both tin and cloth peaking in the early sixteenth century. Consequently ports and fishing stations prospered and local trade was stimulated.

In this book Dr Fox has opened up a new dimension in Devon's history. The flowing text makes for enjoyable as well as informative reading, and is well supplemented with extensive detailed references.

*Helen Harris*

**Devon's Railways** by Helen Harris. Bossiney Books, 2001. 48 pages. Illustrated. £3.99. ISBN 1 899382 40 9.

By coincidence, this review was commenced on the day it was announced that because of what many see as a failing railway service an internal airlink was inaugurated from Exeter. This well-written and well-illustrated book is a timely reminder of hap- pier and more efficient days. However, as one would expect from Helen Harris, the contents go well beyond nostalgia.

The book is divided, primarily on a historical rather than a geographical basis, into six sections. The first describes the precursors of the present railway system, the industrial tramways. The best known is probably the Haylor Granite Tramway, and it was interesting to read of others. The next two sections outline the arrival in Devon of the two mainline services from London, those provided by the Great Western Railway and by the London & South Western Railway. The next part, the longest, concerns the proliferation of branch lines within the county during the latter half of the nineteenth century, and contains a helpful map. In the fifth section, devoted to the years of decline, the reviewer was surprised to learn how many lines and stations had closed down well before the infamous Beeching Report of 1963. Finally, the book ends on a note of hope based on the re-opening of some of Devon's branch lines to provide a new and enjoyable amenity for both locals and visitors.

In a well-organised and adequately cross-referenced book of this length it would be churlish to complain over the lack of an index. Similarly, it is not unreasonable to replace a full list of sources with a brief note on suggested further reading. The book is appropriately priced and should be of value to all interested in Devon's social and industrial history. The reviewer hopes that those libraries who buy it will place it on

the open shelves and not, because of its size, hide it away among the pamphlets.

S Bhanji

**Tin Mines and Miners of Dartmoor** by Tom Greeves. Revised edition 2001. Published by Halsgrove in association with Devon Books. ix preliminary pages + 86 main text pages + 4 figures + 75 plates. £12.95. ISBN 0 86114 766 9.

The book is a photographic record of the tin mining industry on Dartmoor from the late nineteenth century onward supported by conversations with those on the moor who were or had been connected with the industry. This book was published in paperback form in 1986 and revised in 1993. In the preface to the 1993 revision, Greeves states that only minor corrections and alterations have been made to the text and, in the preface to the present revision, he refers to only slight amendments, such as the corrected spellings of names and the identification of a photographer.

The 1986 publication was reviewed by F M Griffith in April 1987 in *The Devon Historian* 34. Griffith describes the book as 'a unique and irreplaceable record' of the miners and mining and as an example of "industrial archaeology" with real people'. She refers to 'Dr Greeves' enthusiasm and affection for a subject – and subjects, who are warmly acknowledged throughout...'. One can only endorse these views and recommend the book to Dartmoor historians and archaeologists and to those who just walk on the Moor.

D L B Thomas

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## SOME MORE DEVON MILLENNIUM HISTORIES

The output of millennium histories continues apace and it is impossible to keep up with them all. Here is an alphabetical scamp through Devon, picking up some of those you may have missed. All have been published within the last couple of years.

David Carter's *Illustrated history of Appledore* (Swindon : D. Carter) also includes an account of the Slade family. *The importance of being Axmouth : a short history* is based on the pageant of the same name written by Norman Owen. Halsgrove is responsible for Bickington's history: *The book of Bickington : from moor to shore* by Stuart Hands. Coverage of a wider area than a parish is provided by Shirley Toulson's *The Blackdown Hills of Somerset and Devon*. Frank Pearce has written *The book of Brixham*, another Halsgrove production. The Buckland Parish Millennium Committee produced *Buckland Tout Saints : the parish, its people and their homes*, a house by house survey with a transcription of the census. P.J. Wood provides a very detailed and indexed study *A history of the parish of Chardstock* which he published with R.W. Carter. Jeanne Axford produced *About C'lyst St. Mary* which was available through the local Post Office. Brian Read published an ambitious well indexed series

entitled *Cockington bygones* (Huish Episcopi : Portcullis). Volume one covered Chelston, Livermead and Stanton Barton while volume two dealt with Cockington Church, Cockington Court and hosteleries. *Cock'ood and the Warren: an historical view* is an 88 page publication devoted to these communities on the Exe Estuary. Colyton History Society worked together to produce *Colyton parish through the centuries* which was launched earlier this year. A good well-referenced social history of the same place in the nineteenth century is *The way we lived then* by Jean Robin (Aldershot : Ashgate). Don Collinson made extensive use of the *Dartmouth Chronicle* for *The chronicles of Dartmouth : an historical yearly log 1854-1954* Dartmouth : Richard Webb). Another combined effort by the local history group is *Aspects of Dawlish history*. Paul Greener's *Drewsteignton millennium picture book* was promoted by the Parish Council.

Ken Beer and Joyce Jones have edited two booklets: *Exminster memories* and *More Exminster memories*. Tony Grumley-Grennan's well-produced *Gidleigh : a Dartmoor village past and present* (Gidleigh : Glebe Publishing) is largely a survey of properties. Hawkechurch is served by a new edition of Jack Banfield's *Hawkechurch : where Dorset meets Devon*. Two more Halsgrove community histories: Avril Stone's *The book of High Bickington : a Devon ridgeway village* and Dick Wills's *The book of Hsington : a photographic history of the parish* provide attractive volumes covering their respective communities. *The Kentisbury catalogue : the past, present and future of "a parish without a village"* was produced by the Kentisbury Catalogue Steering Group, a detailed and closely set 180 page compilation.

Noel Parry continued his history of Lapford with *A mid Devon village : photographs of Lapford between 1880 and 1999* which he also published himself. John Sage compiled *Luppitt parish, church and people* for the Luppitt Local History Group, a wide-ranging and well indexed publication. The Mariansleigh Millennium Group published *Mariansleigh : the parish through the ages* while Membury Local History Society produced Ron Craddock's *Around and about Membury*, with transcripts of documents and line-drawn illustrations. Northleigh Parish Council published Jeremy Sergeant's *Northleigh : a millennium history*, a detailed indexed study but unfortunately spiral bound. Keveral Books of Exmouth published Gerald Millington and Bob Jones's *All about Otterton : behind the picture postcard* by Gerald Millington and Bob Jones. *Payhembury millennium book*, a 157 page illustrated survey was compiled by the specially formed Payhembury Book Group and was edited by Robin Stanes.

A second edition of the extensive and detailed study of Sandford *A parish patchwork* by Daphne Munday saw the light of day (Sandford : Southgate Publishers). *Shebbear 2000 : a millennium celebration* – is one of a number of such local works that the Westcountry Studies Library heard about but was unable to acquire. Two more Halsgrove productions: Silverton Local History Society's *The book of Silverton : portrait of an Exe valley parish* and Roy Radford's *The book of South Tawton and South Zeal*. Carol Shore's *Stories of Stoodleigh* was produced by L.R. Enterprise of Tiverton. Gerry Matthews produced a pamphlet entitled *A history of Thorubury*. An excellent publication footnoted with a good index and picture credits is *The book of Trusham : a parish patchwork* by Alick Cameron (Tiverton : Halsgrove). I.M.B. Hawes had a broad chronological sweep to his *Welcombe : 2000 BC to 2000 AD*. John T. Downes reprinted his pamphlet *Woolfardisworthy (Woolsery) : the village with two names*. The last of this batch is a history of Yarcombe by Ruth : *From monks to the millennium : a history of Yarcombe parish* which includes a survey of properties in the parish.

All these works and more will be listed in the *Devon bibliography*. The 1999 volume

of this has just been produced, price £2.95 from Exeter Central Library, Castle Street, Exeter EX4 3PQ (cheques payable to Devon County Council). The bibliography is also available on the internet at <http://www.devon.gov.uk/library/locstud/devhib99.html>.

But not all historical endeavour has resulted in publications. Mention should be made of the Denbury Archive Group who were involved in several year's work in producing the Denbury Millennium tapestry – 500,000 stitches by 250 participants over six years which involved much research on the village. There is more than one way of 'doing history' and there is certainly a lot of this happening in Devon. Please keep the resulting publications rolling in to the Westcountry Studies Library.

*Ian Maxted  
County Local Studies Librarian*

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## JOHN SOMERS COCKS

John Somers Cocks, who died on 22 April at the age of 79, will be particularly remembered as an outstanding authority on Dartmoor history. He possessed a deep and well documented knowledge of the subject, which he was always generously willing to share with those who consulted him.

In his boyhood John Somers Cocks lived at Chagford, where his love for, and commitment to Dartmoor took hold. During the Second World War he joined the Royal Engineers, and he was serving in India when, in 1943, he contracted polio. A return to England and a long convalescence followed, but the effects sadly prevented him from resuming his Dartmoor walking. His mind, however, was ever active, and he devoted himself to research and writing and the matter of Dartmoor's protection. He became an expert on Dartmoor Commons' law, and this was one subject on which his counsel was often sought. Art was another of his many interests and he compiled the notable catalogue: *Devon Topographical Prints 1660-1870*. The Devon History Society, of which he was a member, was grateful to draw from this highly respected volume for cover illustrations to *The Devon Historian*.

After his marriage in 1956 John and his wife moved to live just south of the moor. Many writers and others who have known him as a wise and kindly mentor will have been saddened at his passing. Our sympathy is extended to his wife Jane and their family.

*H.H.*

## NOTICES

**From Totnes.** Bob Mann has sent in a copy of *The Totnes Historian No 3* (2000-2001), the Totnes Museum Society's annual journal which he edits. The 18-page booklet includes articles: 'C.F. Rea and the importance of local historians' by Karl Morgan-Pritchard, and 'An interesting pavement' by R.L. Saunders. (Free to members of TMS, otherwise obtainable at the Museum, 70 Fore Street, Totnes, £1). Bob Mann's pamphlet *Baring-Gould and the Village Song-Men* has also been received. This gives background to the two-hour show featuring musical items by Mick Bramich and Les Noden, and readings by Bob himself. (Further information of these shows: 01803 866250).

**The South Devon group of the Devon Family History Society** arranges coach trips for its members and other to the Public Record Office at Kew, at approximately three-monthly intervals. The organiser, Mr Dennis Bramble (01803 873525), would be pleased to hear from any members of the DHS interested in visiting the PRO. Cost so far has been £15 per person per visit. The coach will pick up people in Exeter. Depending on traffic conditions, about seven hours are available to be spent at the Record Office.

**Silverton Local History Society** is due to have an evening outing to Tiverton Museum on Monday 17 September, and a talk by Mr John Leach on Lime kilns and Lime burning on Monday 15 October. Details of these and further meetings from Jon Ayshford 01392 860777.

**Widcombe and District Local History Group** meets on 3 October for a talk by Lyn Walmsley on Field Archaeology; on Sunday 7 October for a guided walk around Kelly Mine, Lustleigh; on Saturday 17 November to visit the Royal Albert Museum, Exeter, and on 5 December for a talk by Pauline Richards on the Dartmoor Rescue Group. Details from Hon Sec Anthony Beard on 01364 621246.

### **Heavitree Local History Society**

The Society is currently preparing for a community history project supported by Exeter Museum Services. The exhibition will cover the history of Heavitree parish from as far back as possible to the present time and will be staged at the Royal Albert Memorial Museum, Queen Street, Exeter for 5-6 weeks commencing on 4 May 2002.

This date coincides with the 60th anniversary of the heaviest bombing raids on Exeter and the launch of the British Local History Association's 'Local History Week 2002'.

The Society is encouraging as many organisations and individuals as possible to contribute to the exhibition and with this in mind is staging a small awareness raising display in the foyer of Exeter Central Library from 24 September to 6 October.

Contact Den Perrin, 4 Homefield Road, Exeter, EX1 2QS, tel: 01392 216395, email [pernd@supanet.com](mailto:pernd@supanet.com), if you have any photographs, drawings, documents etc relating to Heavitree which you think might be of interest.

**Devon Transport History.** Many local historians have special interests in transport matters and members of the Devon History Society may have noticed a certain bias in this direction, both in the subjects of speakers at our AGM and in the content of this issue of the journal. It is hoped that members will appreciate this 'one-off feast'. Those for whom means of getting around have less appeal may be assured that such preponderance will not be a permanent feature!

In this edition we also include below an illustration of **St Luke's College**, the venue for our AGM. This is entitled 'Diocesan Training College, Heavitree Road, Exeter', and dated 1855 (Somers Cocks No 1024). Considerable expansion has, of course, taken place since this portrayal of St Luke's, which is now part of the University of Exeter.



*Diocesan Training College, Heavitree Road, Exeter.*

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