

# DEVON HISTORY NEWS

NEWSLETTER OF THE DEVON HISTORY SOCIETY



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The media constantly reminds us we are living through 'historic times', as if the times that preceded said historic bits were dull by comparison and unworthy of note. It's a lesson that is pressed on us daily by our demand for endless novelty and change – a pace of life set by cultural norms with roots that reach long and deep into our history. Time – is of the essence, – waits for no man, – is money, – lies heavy on your hands; in almost all instances we find time described as a scarce resource to be at all times productively employed.

It is beyond doubt that in former times life was lived at a fraction of the rate we are accustomed to today. So is history speeding up too – are we making more of it more quickly – is our history productivity an issue here – are we doing enough of it?

As a live issue, I doubt this will occupy the headlines at any time soon, but with the rise of social media as a source of unreliable information, inflating the risk of bad histories, or worse still, a partial rewriting of history, should we stand by for a rearguard action in defence of traditional historiography?

This edition of the News marks the last of the paper editions. I hope that its continuation in digital guise will serve members equally well. You may be confident that Council continues to work flat out to keep members fully informed and engaged with the job of growing reliable Devon history. We shall remain always a trusted source.

*Chris Wakefield*

Cover: A party halted at the sign for Brixham and Kingswear in a charabanc operated by Lethbridge of Devon, 1920s.

Ref: Flickr 2014-P-330-159 <https://www.flickr.com/photos/canavansandcharabancs/27992593193>

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# From the CHAIRMAN



In this edition you will find invitations to join in the **place name project**, to join in the **'Devon in the 1920s'** project, and to join in the celebration of

the **fiftieth anniversary of the Society.**

Some time ago, we set about launching a project to record the minor place-names – fields, farms, mills, woods etc. This rather foundered when the Society's bid for a small Lottery Fund grant was turned down. Since then, we have regrouped a bit and decided it is best simply to 'get going' and see what happens. The obvious starting-point is the Tithe Survey – most if not all of the county's files are available on-line and can be down-loaded. What would be very helpful is for members/societies to push back into the 18th century and beyond.

'**Devon in the 1920s'** is an ambitious research project to discover 'what happened' in the county after WWI. The project is the brainchild of Dr Julia Neville. Together, we hope to engage individuals and societies in researching particular aspects of the county's life.

We envisage the project lasting about five years – and hopefully ending in a publication.

Devon History Society began in 1969, so this year marks our fiftieth birthday, an event we intend to mark at our October AGM in Exeter Central Library. Enjoy a glass of wine at lunch time as we toast the Society and wish it well for the next fifty years. There will be something light-hearted to engage you as you have your lunch.

At a time when some county or town history societies are struggling or closing for lack of volunteers, the DHS appears to be in good heart. But, we too depend on people to come forward, join the Council and take on responsibilities. Over the next 16 months, we shall lose people who have made outstanding contributions to the Society. If you would be interested in offering your services, do please contact me for an in formal discussion about how you could contribute to the life of the Society.

*Andrew Jones*

If you are publishing anything about the history of your locality, please get in touch. Articles about new research and publications are of value to members even in advance of more formal reviews. Write to [dhsnewsed@gmail.com](mailto:dhsnewsed@gmail.com), with suggestions or ideas.

# DHS Affiliated Societies

I can scarcely believe it is August, and that nearly 12 months have passed since I became your Affiliated Society Liaison Officer. Thank you all for the warm welcome you have given me, and for letting me know about all the amazing work and research you are undertaking around the county.

In the February edition of this newsletter, I introduced the idea of developing a forum for our affiliated societies to seek advice, share knowledge and together solve the issues that they encounter in their efforts to advance the study of Devon's history. To this end, I have created a Facebook Group where representatives from each society will be able to chat, ask questions and support one another. Using this social media platform will enable members to interact easily, and at times convenient to them, but without the need to share contact details. I am conscious that Facebook may not be an option for all of our colleagues, and where this is the case, I will represent you in the

conversation. I would also like to reassure you this new forum will not replace our usual email communication but will instead be an extra way of keeping in touch.

I am also pleased to welcome three new affiliate members to our group, they are Chudleigh History Group, Clayhidon Local History Group and Kingston Local History Group. We have also, sadly, seen two resignations owing to financial pressures and a decline in membership, however we still have 70 affiliated groups. To see, at a glance, where all of our colleagues are located, you can use the new Google Map on the Local Group page of our website. Many thanks to our brilliant webmaster, Martin, for creating the map and for his efforts in updating our Local Group pages whenever required!

Please do keep me updated on what's going on in your group, and how I may best support you in your work. You can contact me by email

*[abigail.gray@acgarchaeology.co.uk](mailto:abigail.gray@acgarchaeology.co.uk)*

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## Hello from Kingston

Kingston Local History Society (KLHS) is an important aspect of the Parish's past and present fabric, as well as a record and celebration of our iconic Devon village. Kingston, with its narrow lanes, limited facilities (no shop, no through road, no Post Office, no school, and only one bus a week!) is a source of pride for its residents, and a pleasant place for visitors and walkers to enjoy the scenery of Wonwell Estuary and the South West Coast path.

Kingston has a very strong community and is able to mitigate its relative isolation through a number of clubs, societies and activities, including KLHS, which has a healthy membership and good attendance at events

and visits. The KLHS Committee manages the processes of event organisation; outings and visits; the extensive archive of historical documents and artefacts; the publication and sale of brochures and printed books; and responds to external enquires about ancestors / friends known to have lived in the village. A resume of each KLHS event is included in the Kingston Parish newsletter and KLHS organises photographic exhibitions, drawing on a substantial library of current and historic pictures, (many of our beautiful church; the Dolphin Inn and the older houses), these are sometimes used to celebrate the past and sometimes to compare and contrast the changing way of village life.

We are very pleased to join Devon History Society and look forward to working alongside you all.

# Two Ordinary Houses, two Extraordinary Women

## Devon Suffrage Activists project inspires two new blue plaques for Exeter

Last month two very ordinary nineteenth-century terraced houses among Exeter's many received the distinction of a blue plaque.. One is at 33 Herschell Road, Mount Pleasant, the other at Redvers in Alphington Street. They now commemorate two extraordinary women: Edith Splatt, the first woman to fight and win a City Council election in Exeter in 1921, and Rachel Allen, the first Labour woman councillor, elected in 1924.

Crowdfunding for the manufacture and installation of these plaques was organized by Exeter Labour Women's Council, after

the group heard from Julia Neville about the contribution of Exeter women in the struggle for Votes for Women.

Christina Wahle owns the house on Herschell Road, where Edith Splatt lived from 1911 till her death in 1945. Holly Jarrett and Alys Quance, who co-ordinated the project, had to track the owner down in Germany to get permission to place the plaque. Christina said 'I feel the plaque is a great honour. And how wonderful to have lived in the same house as such a fighter for equality and suffrage.'

The picture shows the plaques on display at Exeter's Respect Festival with (left to right) Holly Jarrett, Julia Neville and Alys Quance.



# Devon in the 1920s

I wrote in the last edition of Devon History News about the possibility of a DHS-led research project on Devon in the 1920s, and I was encouraged by the number of members who got in touch to express an interest. Ideas such as rural crime, tuberculosis sanatoria, farm tourism and boarding schools for the children of those working abroad in the Empire have all been suggested. I've also had positive responses from other organisations in the county such as the South West Heritage Trust and the Devon Family History Society, saying that they too would like to support and promote the project.

The DHS Council have now agreed that the Society should take the lead over the next few years in co-ordinating a Devon in the 1920s research project, and I am exploring how we can best work in partnership with family and community historians, linking together the records and memories that exist about individuals and the more formal archived material about the environment around them in

order to understand what was distinctive about Devon's 1920s.

We have selected five key themes that provide a useful framework. They cover the Legacy of the First World War, Growing up in the 1920s, Rural Life, Progress and new Technologies, and Holidays and Leisure. Plans are being developed to launch the project within the Society's programme for next year. You'll hear all about that in the Spring 2020 edition of DHS News, and I will also be at the Annual Conference in October 2019 with further information. But if reading this has sparked an interest in you to find out more or contribute to one of our themes, do get in touch with me straightaway, by email to

*[j.f.neville@btinternet.com](mailto:j.f.neville@btinternet.com)*

*Old postcard image of Plymouth city centre, showing St Andrew's Church on the left, with the Guildhall just beyond. In the centre of the photo are the town's Municipal Buildings and Basket Street, both of which were destroyed in the Blitz. The street on the far right is Bedford Street, roughly where Royal Parade lies today. Posted on Flickr by Richard and Gill Long. License: Wikimedia Creative Commons <https://www.flickr.com/photos/richardandgill/657945402>*



# Dr Claire Donovan, 1948-2019



DHS Members will be sorry to learn of the death in June of Dr Claire Donovan, following a brief illness. Claire was a member of the DHS Council from

2012 until she left Devon in the autumn of 2016. Members may recall her as the host at the DHS Summer Meeting at Poltimore in 2013, when the Poltimore Estate Research Society (PERS) entertained DHS members.

Claire was an art historian, with a particular interest in medieval manuscripts. In 1991 she published 'The de Brailes Hours: shaping the book of hours in 13th-century Oxford', and in 1993 'The Winchester Bible', an account of the production of one of the finest surviving 12th century English bibles. Much of her career, however, was spent in developmental roles: as dean of academic development at what was to become Southampton Solent University, as deputy-principal at Dartington College of Arts, and between 2007 and 2013 in various roles with the Poltimore House Trust, seeking an assured future for one of Devon's great country houses. This role drew out her resourceful temperament and colleagues remember how during her first winter there she put up a tent within the then unheated old chapel and brought in a small fan heater so that she had at least somewhere warm to work.

Claire was instrumental in establishing the Poltimore Estate Research Society in 2012 after the completion of the University of Exeter's Poltimore Community Landscapes Project. She collaborated with fellow PERS member Jocelyn Hemming on an article published in *The Devon Historian* in 2014, 'Evidence for Eighteenth-Century Rebuilding at Poltimore House: Interpreting Edmund Prideaux's Drawings, 1716 and 1727': Her passion, however, remained medieval art, and she gave an inspiring lecture on the Becket Casket and its iconography at a DHS event in early 2016 celebrating Becket in Devon.

Claire was deeply committed to her family, especially her two sons from her first marriage, Giles and Dunstan, and to community life, particularly with her second husband, the distinguished academic Professor Colin Platt, at the Old Rectory in Littlehempston where they moved in 2002. After his death in 2015, she took up a research fellowship in the Parker Library at Corpus Christi College, Cambridge, home to many celebrated medieval manuscripts. She subsequently decided to return to Oxford, where she had lived as a girl and later studied for her postgraduate diploma, to work again on medieval art using the wonderful resources of the Bodleian Library. Her death sadly leaves that work unfinished.

*Julia Neville*

# Blue Plaque unveiled at Willand

On a wet and windy afternoon in March, the Devon History Society held a special ceremony in Willand to recognise the inspirational Margaret Partridge BSc., MIEE as part of the celebrations for International Women's Day.

A blue plaque was unveiled at Margaret's home in the village to commemorate her achievements and the role she played in bringing electricity to rural communities in the 1920s.

Margaret Partridge was born in Nymet Rowland in 1891 and her parents were keen that she and her sister had as good an education as their brothers. She went on to achieve a degree in mathematics in London but it is for her career in engineering that she is best known. Her company M. Partridge and Co. provided electricity supplies to the villages of Cheriton Fitzpaine, South Molton and Bampton and she provided apprenticeships for women who were interested in engineering careers. During the Second World War she first founded and ran Exeter Munitions Ltd., and then worked for the Ministry of Labour from 1941-45 as the Women's Technical Officer for the South-

West, advising factories on the employment of women. After retiring she devoted herself to voluntary work in Willand, ensuring, for example, that all the electrical work for the new Willand Village Hall was undertaken by the local Women's Institute.

Margaret Partridge was a pioneer entrepreneur, and was one of the first women to run an engineering company on her own. She was also deeply interested in creating employment opportunities for women in science and engineering, and worked tirelessly to this end throughout her life.

The unveiling was followed by a reception at Willand Village Hall where guests heard more about her life and career from Paul Auchterlonie, who had researched her story and had nominated her for the plaque (see digital pages).

The occasion was also supported by Western Power Distribution, which is keen to promote engineering careers for women.

## Ann Bond

*L to R: DHS Chairman, Andrew Jones, Annie Hooper (for Harpitt House) and DHS Council member Ann Bond at the unveiling.*





# Devon History Society Place Name Project

For some time now the Society has been considering Devon place names. Any existing records of place names haven't been added to or updated since the 1930's. We have now decided to initiate a project to rectify this situation.

Ideally we would use the internet to hold a database and mapping system to record place names. But the costs were found to be prohibitive and sources of funding remain a challenge.

Instead we are going to launch the project in a more restrained style utilising free resources as much as possible. Our plan is to commence with a standard spreadsheet. The first step will be to populate this spreadsheet with tithe apportionment field names and numbers on a parish basis. We may be able to do this automatically, or we may not, but in any case the field names from the Tithe Apportionments will need to be added to the new database.

The tithe apportionment spreadsheets have been reviewed for accuracy and can be found on the Devon County Council web site [here](https://www.devon.gov.uk/historicenvironment/tithe-map/):

<https://www.devon.gov.uk/historicenvironment/tithe-map/>

After the field names, other records containing minor place names in your parish will need to be added, and it is here that your input will be essential. The input

system will be based on spreadsheet technology, and more specific training will be available for volunteers when you wish to start adding place names from your locality.

See an example of a place names spreadsheet filled with tithe apportionment data [here](https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/12Rhf5kJIQJwco2oZO13CqSKH3RnNHVrVz797hmn3iQ/edit?usp=sharing):

<https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/12Rhf5kJIQJwco2oZO13CqSKH3RnNHVrVz797hmn3iQ/edit?usp=sharing>

What we are now seeking is enthusiastic volunteers to add the minor (field, farm, mill, woodland etc) place name data going back to the 17th and 18th centuries; or even further if that information is available to you.

If you would like to be involved or require further information please contact Andrew Jones, [acjtherectory@btinternet.com](mailto:acjtherectory@btinternet.com).

*Martin Smith*

DHS Place Names Project

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## Devon Bibliography Newsletter

This is to let you know that the latest issue of the Devon bibliography newsletter Westcountry Studies has been published on-line [here](https://devon-bibliography.blogspot.com/2019/08/westcountry-studies-issue-9-august-2019.html)

<https://devon-bibliography.blogspot.com/2019/08/westcountry-studies-issue-9-august-2019.html>

Please let me know if you wish to be included on the circulation list or if you know of anyone else who might be interested in being alerted to it.

[ianmaxted@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:ianmaxted@hotmail.co.uk)

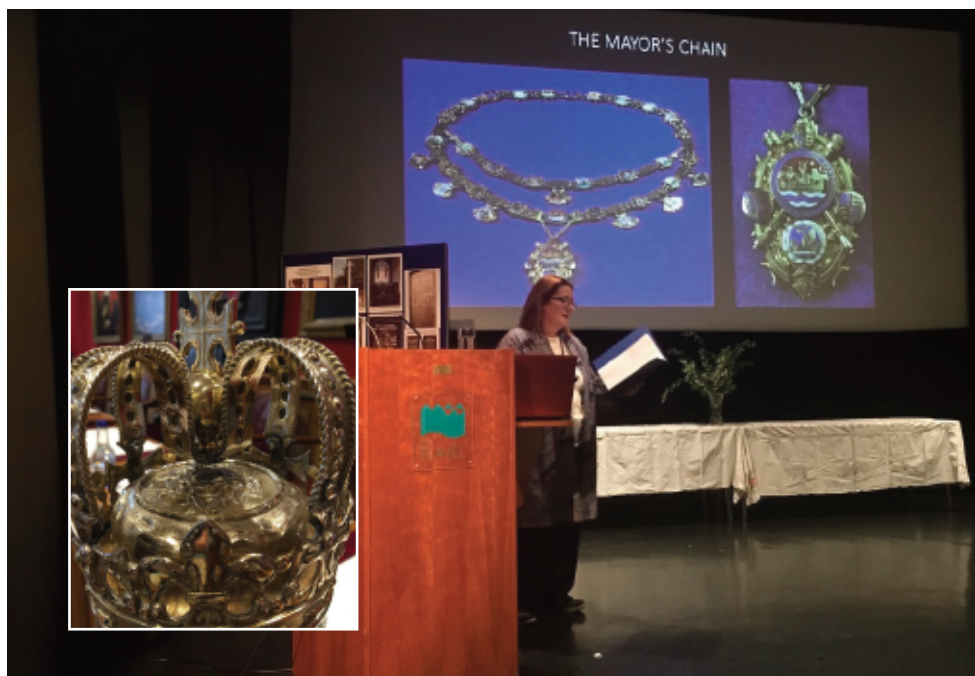
*Ian Maxted*

# Dartmouth Research Group makes DHS welcome

The DHS summer meeting was hosted by Dartmouth History Research Group, where members and guests were entertained in the Flavel Centre to a full agenda of talks and tours amid the wider glories of the town of Dartmouth

Master of ceremonies was Chairman of the Group Gail Ham who introduced the speakers and led some of the presentations herself.

In the afternoon the meeting was divided into groups and had tours and visits, including to The Guildhall in Victoria Rd, where there was a display of valuable regalia in the main council chamber. This brought to life a talk on the history of these official artefacts that had taken place in the morning. The Council Chamber is hung with a number of portraits of distinguished Dartmouthians, which brought home the economic significance of the town in earlier times.



Gail Ham reveals the treasures of Dartmouth's Town Regalia

*Inset: one of the 'Large Maces' from the collection of official town regalia. (photos JanWood and Gail Ham)*

# Seventeenth-Century people and their communities

## Reconstructing the fieldscape through the Norden Survey c.1613

In March 2019 Friends of Devon's Archives in partnership with Devon Archaeological Society held a successful seminar on 'Investigating Medieval and Early Modern Devon: manorial records and the c.1613 Norden survey of Devon Crown Lands'. This was led by Dr David Stone, Dr Frances Billinge and Penny Martin. Devon History Society members were invited to attend this seminar and it turned out to be a very popular event. A group of volunteers took up the request to start translating the eight Devon Manors covered by Norden's survey – Ashburton, Bovey Tracey, Bradninch, Buckfastleigh, Exeter Castle, Heathfield in Aveton Gifford, and Ottery St Mary- and to research the wider history of these places in the seventeenth century. Each survey describes the manor boundaries, the names of those with holdings in the manor, together with field names and their size. It also gives details of some local financial malpractices which disadvantaged the Crown.

David Stone is now taking on academic oversight of the project and, spearheaded by Katharine Chant Chair of FoDA, an application is being made to the National Lottery Heritage Fund in the hope of securing a grant so that the full survey might be published. Using manorial documents opens up many areas of study for local and family historians and this project will help researchers learn a number of new skills including palaeography and mapping, as well as generating much interest in the local community.

The next meeting of the project group is on at 11.00 a.m. on Monday 30th September. Devon Rural Archive has kindly offered their splendid venue in Shilstone near Modbury for this event. If you would like to attend or be involved in the project please e mail [fbillinge@btinternet.com](mailto:fbillinge@btinternet.com).

*Dr Frances Billinge*  
Secretary Friends of Devon's Archives.

*Below: Title page, Norden's Survey*



## THE PROGRAMME FOR

## 2019

DHS EVENTS FOR AUTUMN-  
WINTER 2019 AND THE NEW  
VENUE FOR THE AGM AND  
CONFERENCE

The programme for the Annual Conference is now available on the Society's website along with the booking form. The theme of this year's conference is **The Maritime History of Devon** and we have three speakers from affiliated societies (from North, South and East Devon) as well as three invited speakers; the keynote presentation is by **Dr. James Davey** of the University of Exeter's History Department who will talk on **"Devon, the Royal Navy, and the French Revolutionary Wars, 1793-1801"**.

As I mentioned in the previous issue of Devon History News, we have a **change of venue this year - the Rougemont Room at Exeter Central Library** which can hold 80 people and is fully IT equipped. The timings of the AGM and Conference have not changed, with the AGM beginning at 10.00 and the conference at 11.15. Exeter Central Library cannot offer members a pre-booked midday meal, but there is a large choice of places in Central Exeter to buy lunch, or members can bring their own lunch and use the seats outside the Rougemont Room and in the neighbouring garden.

Prior to the AGM and Conference, the **Friends of Devon Archives (FODA)** will be holding their own **AGM and Conference on Saturday, September 21st, at St. Nicholas Priory, Mint Lane, Exeter**, and the programme and booking will be available via the FODA website.

Following last year's successful event focussing on Maps and the Devon Landscape, we are holding another **Seminar and Workshop** at the **Devon Heritage Centre on Monday, November 4th**. The theme of this event is on **Digitising Your Archives**, which will not only look at recent local digital projects, not only from the technical aspect of digitisation, but also on how to describe and present digital material; there will also be a demonstration of accessible and inexpensive digital equipment, and the seminar will conclude with a paper on the Society's own project on the **digital mapping of Devon Women Suffrage Activists**.

The final event of the year, on **Tuesday November 19th** at the **Mint Methodist Centre in Exeter**, is the lecture by **John Smith on HMS Exeter and the Battle of the River Plate**, which celebrates the eightieth anniversary of the first major naval confrontation of the Second World War. John has been the guest of the Society several times in the past is a very knowledgeable speaker with an infectious enthusiasm.

*Paul Auchterlonie*



# Prison History

## Prison History: Now Bigger and Better

Last summer you might have heard of the Prison History project based at The Open University. That resource has now become bigger and better.

Alongside the 19th Century Prisons database (<https://www.prisonhistory.org/19th-century-prisons/>), a searchable list of 847 local and convict prisons and their archives which were operational between 1800 and 1899, we have developed Your Local Lock-Up, a public engagement project which aims to recover structures used for the temporary confinement or restraint either of those accused or crime between their arrest and appearance before the local magistrate, of those being moved between penal institutions (or while undergoing their trial at court), and of those 'behaving badly' in the local community.

Lock-ups have been almost entirely overlooked by penal historians, but they are essential for understanding criminal justice at the local level and the use and experience of imprisonment in British history. By bringing data on surviving and demolished lock-ups into a national database, we will be able to explore various aspects of their use and character, including their design. This will also allow us to complete the next stage in the recovery of the penal landscape of historic Britain.

To do this, we need the help of local historians. We currently have around 650 lock-ups in the database. We know this is far from exhaustive, and there are many more that need to be added. We are calling on members of the public, especially local historians, to help us recover more lock-ups. We would be very grateful if

your members could tell us about any lock-ups – including police stations, cells in town halls, courthouses, workhouses, and stocks – used for temporary confinement between the 16th and the early 20th century. We have developed a contribution form, so that your members can put the information directly into the database: <https://www.prisonhistory.org/local-lock-up/submit-lock-up/> We would also be very grateful for any additions or corrections to information on lock-ups already in the database – there is an ‘Anything to Add’ button on each lock-up entry.

For this project, we are looking for many different types of evidence on lock-ups, and we especially welcome historic and present-day descriptions of structures, anecdotes about the use of lock-ups, and pictures. We are also collecting ‘stories’ of lock-ups or prisons for our new features page:

<https://www.prisonhistory.org/category/stories/>. Examples include a history of a particular institution or lock-ups and prisons in the local area; the restoration or conversion of a lock-up; or accounts of how data from the project is being used.

And we are inviting members of the public who are interested in lock-ups and penal history more generally to join our project team to help with research and development:

<https://www.prisonhistory.org/local-lock-up/become-a-contributor/>

We want this project to be of use to local communities and local history societies. Every lock-up in the database includes a ‘print’ button, which generates a ready-made pamphlet containing information and an image which can be displayed or distributed. Please do let us know if this facility is of use to your society and members, and please do let us know if there are any additional features that you would find useful on the site. We need your feedback to develop this resource further.

Finally, Prison History has entered the 21st century! We now have a presence on social media. Connect with us on Facebook

(<https://www.facebook.com/Prison-History-UK-2390455521218014>); follow us on Twitter (<https://twitter.com/prisonhistoryuk>), and share material with us on Instagram (<https://www.instagram.com/prisonhistoryuk/>). You can also subscribe to get all the project news and updates: just visit <https://www.prisonhistory.org> to enter your details.

For further information, contact project lead Rosalind Crone:

**[Rosalind.Crone@open.ac.uk](mailto:Rosalind.Crone@open.ac.uk)**



*Above: Wet and wild weather in Willand, accompanied the unveiling of the DHS's latest Blue Plaque.*

**Following the blue plaque unveiling at Harpitt House, Paul Auchterlonie spoke to DHS members and guests in Willand Village Hall on Margaret Partridge's life and times. He has kindly given me his lecture notes, which appear below, offering a fulsome and detailed profile of a remarkable woman.**



## MARGARET MARY PARTRIDGE (1891-1967)

After a long hiatus, Devon History Society decided recently to reinstitute their Blue Plaque scheme honouring the lives and achievements of notable Devonians, who fall outside the remit of existing Blue Plaque schemes (such as that of Exeter Civic Society). The first of these new plaques was unveiled on March 6th at Harpitt House, Willand, where Margaret Partridge spent

some of her childhood, and all of her retirement and where she died in 1967. A summary of Margaret Partridge's life and achievement is given below.

### **Early Background**

Born in Barton, Nymet Rowland on 08/04/1891. Father man of independent means, John Leonard James Partridge (1859-1922), mother Eleanor (1858-1926) was a niece of gentleman farmer James Partridge of Harpitt House, Willand, and later Verbeer Manor, whose estate she inherited with her sister Mary Ann.

The Parkhouse estate eventually passed to Margaret Partridge and her three siblings, Eleanor (b. 1894, who qualified as a doctor), James (b. 1896) and Stephen (b. 1899).

### **Education**

Awarded the Arnott and Jane Benson scholarships at Bedford High School for Girls.

Graduated aged 23 with a BSc in Maths from Bedford College, London.

The principal of Bedford College, Margaret Tuke, wrote that Margaret "is likely to prove successful in a non-scholastic post, where her powers as an organiser will have scope".

### **Career**

After a short spell as a teacher in Yorkshire after graduating, she moved in 1915 to work for Arthur Henry Barker, the well-known heating engineer who was managing director of J.F. Phillips & Son, Heating and Ventilation Engineers of London.

Then moved in 1917 on to take charge of electrical testing in a factory in Willesden (Arthur Lyon and Wrench) where women workers produced searchlights, x-ray units and mobile and static generators.

Left this job in 1919 as a result of the Restoration of Pre-War Practices Act, which allowed the men who had been in the armed forces to return to their old jobs. Many women who had been trained as engineers were so dismayed at being dismissed that they formed the Women's Engineering Society in 1919. MP joined the WES in 1920.

MP worked for the Birmingham firm Klaxons Ltd., as chief engineer 1920-1921.

MP moved back to Devon in 1921, and started her own firm, M. Partridge & Co., Ltd., Domestic and Electrical Engineers.

Worked on bringing electricity to country houses and farms. Had to overcome a lot of resistance (lots of patronising men) but she said that being a woman engineer was "not an insuperable obstacle" as "there is little likelihood of the clients forgetting us".

Said in 1922 that to be successful in business required "the impudence of a monkey, the epidermis of a hippopotamus, the patience of an elephant, and the energy of an ant" as well as an understanding landlord, good contacts, and loads of publicity.

Was keen to convince women of the benefits of electricity and electrical appliances. Set up a successful exhibition in Exeter in 1922 and gave a daily lecture to "stir up the women of Exeter to demand the installation of electricity". She advertised her company as "Women for Woman's Work". In 1923 opened an office in London.



With the help of the WES she used to take girls straight from school to give them training for an engineering career. One of her apprentices was Beatrice Shilling whom she encouraged to become an engineer. Shilling took a BA and MA at the University of Manchester and became a highly respected aeronautical engineer, working on the Merlin engines which powered the Spitfire and the Hurricane and later on the Blue Streak rocket.

Brought electricity through her company to Bampton, South Molton and Cheriton Fitzpaine between 1925 and 1927.

Central Electricity Generating Board and the National Grid took over electrical supply in 1927 and used as the basis of their electrification scheme for the South-West, the plans which MP and her colleague Dr John Purves had drawn up in MP's office. MP's company worked between 1927 and 1932 on the distribution and installation of electrical equipment.

Joined the newly-founded Electrical Association for Women in 1924, and was instrumental in setting up the Exeter Branch in 1929 (17th in the country). She shared EAW's enthusiasm for reducing the amount of time women, particularly rural women, had to spend on everyday housework. Became EAW's organiser in the South-West, contributing to the EAW's flagship book *Electrical Handbook for Women* (eight editions between 1934 and 1965), and helped to convince manufacturers to produce an electric cooker designed by women.

MP was an experienced lecturer, giving talks in 1929 in Torquay to the Incorporated Municipal Electrical Association and in 1930 she gave the keynote speech to the Western Centre of the Institution of Electrical Engineers in Exeter, which was attended by (male) engineers from as far away as Cheltenham and Cardiff. She also wrote regularly for *The Woman Engineer*, more often on practical and business matters rather than technical issues.

MP was an accomplished businesswoman, adept at PR, strong on leadership and training, and with a sound grasp of economics and costings, as well as all the technical requirements of her profession.

Between 1932 and 1939 worked as a freelance electrical engineer on "all sorts" of projects, including one in 1936 to construct a dam at Belstone to pipe water along the Taw Valley to North Devon.

Between 1940 and 1941 she was Company Secretary to Exeter Munitions Ltd, which was set up to manufacture and deal in "war-like equipment and stores of every description".

MP was elected vice-president of the WES in 1942 and served as president 1943-1945.

During the Second World War, from 1941 to 1945, she was appointed by Verena Holmes to be South-West Regional Woman Technical Officer for the Ministry of Labour. Verena Holmes was a founding members of the WES and the first woman elected to the Institution of Mechanical Engineers (in 1924)

MP was based in Bristol and her job was in her own words "inspecting factories with the purpose of recommending methods of saving labour or 'dilution'".

Dilution meant "using on a job a less important worker from an industrial or military viewpoint than the one usually employed". She found the use of labour-saving devices and flexible

working increased productivity, and wrote that “personality, imagination and brains” and “understanding, ingenuity and honest thinking” were what really counted in factory and industrial management. “It is leadership which counts every time”.

### **Retirement**

Moved back to Harpitt House, Willand after the Second World War, where she was joined by her lifelong friend Margaret Dorothea Rowbotham (1883–1978) in the late 1950s. In retirement she said “Don’t leave it too late, and don’t consider that it will be unending rest”. She herself took on a huge number of local responsibilities, particularly in the village of Willand, including helping to build the village hall for Willand for half the normal cost by cutting down labour costs and having members of the Willand Women’s Institute, of which she was president, install all the electrical wiring.

Died at Harpitt House, Willand on 27/10/1967 and is buried in Willand churchyard. Her friend and companion Margaret Rowbotham died in 1978 and is also buried in Willand.

### **Achievements**

Although Margaret Partridge would probably not have described herself as a feminist, a great deal of her life centred round improving the lives of women. Firstly, she was keen to persuade women to use electricity and electrical appliances to reduce the amount of time spent of the hard physical labour of domestic chores such as washing and cleaning and so have more time to develop their own potential. Secondly, she was very keen on women’s education, both formally, persuading several of her apprentices such as Beatrice Shilling to take up careers in engineering, and, informally, through her war work which helped to demonstrate that women were as capable as men at all sorts of factory work. Moreover, when Beatrice Shilling was discovered in charge by herself of one of Partridge’s power stations at night in the 1920s, this was found to be in contravention of an International Labour Organisation directive and Margaret Partridge worked tirelessly with members of the Women’s Engineering Society to change the law, believing, as she did, that women were capable of working without a male supervisor at all times and places (the ILO regulation was finally revoked in the 1950s).

Above all, Margaret Partridge’s career as an engineer and a businesswomen, demonstrated that there was and should be no glass ceiling for women; that, if a job needed to be done, it could be done by a woman just as easily as a man, and that women should not be restricted to particular careers, but should be free to enter any profession. Margaret Partridge was able to operate in all aspects of business – the technical, the administrative, the financial and the managerial. She was a dynamic and effective leader and one of the most successful Devon businesswomen during the first half of the twentieth century.

### **Podcast**

There is a short podcast on BBC Radio Devon where James Watts interviews Paul Auchterlonie of Devon History Society and Nina Baker of the Women’s Engineering Society about the life and achievements of Margaret Partridge. It is part of the A Podded History of Devon series and can be found at <https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/po6ldvn2>.

*Paul Auchterlonie*

# Affiliated Societies' Publications

Local historians often miss out on relevant research data because publications are often so localised that they seldom reach beyond the small community they were originally aimed at. There is frequently wider interest in many of these works and wider sharing has long been a goal of the DHS. If Affiliates could compile a list their own self published work, to help other members to see what local Devon studies are available to them, then we would all benefit. Huntsham's list is below. Other Affiliates are more than welcome to send their lists in for publication.

## Huntsham Local History Society:

### ANNOTATED LIST OF CURRENT NOTES

1. **AFTER MANY YEARS - MEMORIES OF THE WEST COUNTRY** by Angelina Dyke Dunn (nee Troyte). Angelina Troyte wrote this lively account around 1910 about her childhood in Devon in the mid nineteenth century. Not only is it interesting as a social history document but also a revealing insight into the character of her father, Arthur Henry Dyke Acland Troyte, who inherited Huntsham Estate in 1852. [24pp £3]
2. **A MISSING CHURCH CROSS** by David Wall. A reference from 1937 led to this account of a hunt for a possible mediaeval cross in Huntsham churchyard. [6pp £1]
3. **EMILY JOSEPHINE SCHNITZER** by Juliet Lunn. This is an intriguing and well researched early 19th century family mystery involving the surprising life at Huntsham Court. [16pp £3]
4. **HUNTSHAM'S CURIOUS GRANITE WHEEL** by David Wall. An investigation into a curious granite wheel found by a Huntsham resident's dog in a rhododendron thicket. [14pp £1]

5. **THE OLD PARSONAGE – A BRIEF HISTORY** by Peter Thompson and Roy Arnott. The detailed history of Huntsham's possibly oldest remaining building, as told by two of its owners. [30pp £3]

6. **KATIE'S HONEYMOON** from the letters of Katharine Acland Troyte. Katharine married Charles Acland Troyte in 1864 and their honeymoon in Europe was probably paid for by her parents. This set of ten letters sent to her mother is part of a collection of letters donated to Huntsham Society and now on permanent loan to Devon Record Office. [18pp £3]

7. **MEMORIES OF HUNTSHAM** by Richard John (Dick) Gould. Dick wrote this account of his happy childhood holidays in the 1920s and 1930s at Huntsham Court, giving a revealing insight into the working life of a Devon Country House before the second World War. [34pp £3]

8. **HUNTSHAM** by Olive Greenslade. This is a reprint of a charming account of the history of Huntsham, written in 1981 by a former Huntsham School teacher. It was the inspiration for the later, much enlarged, Huntsham Book. [22pp £3]

9. **MEMORIES OF DAIRY FARMING** by Jean Goddard. Born in 1934 and brought up on local farms this is an interesting personal account of mid-20th century dairying. [10pp £1]

10. **HUNTSHAM MILL** by John Wilson. The existence of a 'Huntsham Mill' on the 1840 tithe map prompted questions as to what it was and what happened to it. The mill pond, old leats and roads are re-discovered and the probable reason why the Redwood family gave up the business. [14pp £3]

11. **ALL SAINTS, HUNTSHAM GRAVEYARD MAP AND MONUMENTAL INSCRIPTIONS** by Dorothy Southward, Shirley Prescott, Claire de la Motte & Andrew Veal. This is an invaluable guide to the graves, their inscriptions and locations in Huntsham churchyard that will be of great use to those searching for graves of ancestors. [26pp £3]

12. **CHANGE RINGING AT HUNTSHAM AND THE FINE & ATTENDANCE BOOK** by Michael R. Hatchett. The lucky discovery of the Fine & Attendance Book on the internet was the motive for Mike Hatchett to describe the art of change-ringing and how it began at All Saints, Huntsham, through the pioneering enthusiasm of Charles Troyte, his two brothers and Huntsham villagers in the mid-19th century. [32pp £4]

For any of the above, please contact [david-wall@lineone.net](mailto:david-wall@lineone.net)



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# Beaford Hidden Histories: Oral History Project

In 2016 Beaford Arts (now known as Beaford) was awarded a three-year Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) grant for its Hidden Histories project. The project centred upon photographs held in the Beaford Archive; there are three collections (i) 'the old archive' consisting mainly of nineteenth and early twentieth century photographs collected and copied by James Ravilious; (ii) Photographs taken by Roger Deakins in the early 1970s of people and activities in rural north Devon; and (iii) Photographs taken by James Ravilious between the mid-1970s and 1990 of life in north Devon. The three collections contain well in excess of 100,000 photographs. The HLF grant was for three distinct activities relating to the photographs (a) digitising and cataloguing of 10,000 images; (b) creating community trails associated with the photographs in various North Devon locations; and (c) an oral history project linked to the photographs. This note concerns only the oral history project, however more information on all of the activities can be found at the Beaford website under the 'projects' drop-down menu (<https://beaford.org>).

The aim of the oral history project was to provide an oral history context for the photographs in the Archive that were taken in the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s. Many people who were photographed were interviewees, additionally a wide range of people across the area who were involved in activities pictured in the photographic collections were also interviewed. The project ran from March 2017–May 2019. Robin Ravilious (James Ravilious' widow) helped identify some key individuals to be interviewed and as the project developed a great variety of people contributed their stories. In total 125 North Devonians (individually and in groups) gave testimony to the project. All of the interviews were digitally recorded by the Oral historian and/or community volunteers. There is more than 105 hours of recordings now held in the Beaford archive. All of the interviews have been catalogued and most of them have been transcribed. The Archive represents a significant resource for local historian in north Devon. Currently some of the recordings are on-line and more will be added in due course. The images are searchable by keyword, place, date and people's names.

*Malcolm Cowburn & Emma Down (Beaford Archivist) 29th August 2019)*

# Oral History in North Devon: Index of interviews

For further information on these interviews please contact the Beaford Archive  
Call us on 01769 572573 or email [info@beaford.org](mailto:info@beaford.org)

## Owen Holwill

Iddesleigh

Agriculture, Environment, Trade, Domestic, Dairy Farming, Education, Farming machinery, Cider making, Shopping, Farming

## Richard Ashford

Morthoe

Mortehoe, Ilfracombe, Woolacombe, history of tourism

## Joan Weeks

Iddesleigh

Set up of Farms for City Children with Michael Morigio, domestic life, working at Duke of York in Iddesleigh

## Hector Allin

Dolton

Agriculture, Events, Religion, Village View, Education, Dairy farming, Mixed farming, Potato farming, Barley crop, World War Two, Church warden, Church services, Farming practice, Dolton parish church, Dolton Football Team, Cultivation

## Mary Cox and Joan Weeks

Iddesleigh

Iddesleigh Friendly Society, village life, domesticity/cooking/making (preserves, butter, soap etc), Iddesleigh village history, farming practices

## Dudley & Marion Middleton

Riddlecombe

Riddlecombe village life, reed growing and combing

## Geoffrey & Mrs Cleverdon

Hatherleigh

Farming in Hatherleigh, Hatherleigh Moor, the role of music in rural life

## George Lake

Dolton, Ashreigney, Beaford

Cheese factory, farming, bus driving

## Norman & Lily Lock

Dolton

Dairy farming, sheep and beef farming, early (pre-WW2) childhood memories of growing up on a farm, German prisoners of war, evacuees, Dolton 1940s-1980s, Dolton village hall

## Margaret Bolt

High Bickington

Role of women on the farm and in the household, work of farmers wife, preparing meals at harvest time, dairy farming, making clotted cream, poultry farming.

## Dr Paul Bangay

Torrington

Buildings (hospitals, care homes) GPs, Nurse, Christmas, Abattoir injuries. James Ravilious, poverty

## Cecil Denford 1

Hatherleigh

Childhood memories of 1930s and 1940s, Hatherleigh carnival and Tar barrel run, the 'garland', WW2 memories, white witches and their cures, other superstitions.

## Dennis Bater

Black Torrington, Iddesleigh,

Hatherleigh, Winkleigh

Hatherleigh, Iddesleigh, Fire fighting, transport, farming, Winkleigh Fair, youth culture.

## Cecil Denford 2

Hatherleigh

Similar to previous interview

## Colonel Bob Gilliat

Lee, Lundy, Ilfracombe

Lundy Isle, management and practical day-to-day operations

## Norma Latham

Kings Nympton

Farming, home and family life, children, dairy, local clubs, milk delivery, religion, sweet shop, farm workers, German prisoners, shearing, holidaymakers, markets, Young Farmers, growing up in rural community

## Betty Willis, Derek Sanders and Gordon Causley

Hatherleigh

Working as a seamstress, domestic life, shops, WW2, school in Hatherleigh, growing up in rural community

## Roy and Lorna

Herniman

Kingscote, High Bickington

Farming, Shearing across North Devon, High Bickington, Kingscote, Libbaton golf course, Royal British Legion, Parish Council, know people in Dolton photos

## Brian Watts

Mortehoe

Shipwrecks of North Devon, general Mortehoe life

## Margaret Weeks, & David Weeks

Exbourne

Farming, postmaster on bike, growing up in a Devon longhouse, village school, horses, dogs, bakeries, grocery deliveries, chapel

## Pam Webber

Chulmleigh

Farming around Chulmleigh

## Dave Clements

Dolton

Recreation, trade, transport, fairground, fairs, roadwork, Village Council, council workers, sweet making

**Dr Richard Westcott**

South Molton

Rural GP, medical practice, home visits, attending patients in hospital, South Molton

**Sir Michael Knight**

Morteheo

Recreation, politics, trade, housing, First World War, Second World War, buildings, second homes, tourism

**Walter Dayman**

Bradworthy

Bradworthy, Beaver Terrace

**Roy Webber**

Burrington

Burrington, small holding, arrival of electricity in Burrington, annual pattern of subsistence farmer, sheep, wool

**Amy Chapple**

Burrington

Burrington, trades/shop post WW2, village water pumps, postal deliveries, mixed farming, Burrington carnival

**Gordon Short**

Burrington

Farming patterns and agricultural trade

**Phyllis Eastman**

South Molton

Farming, sobriety, environment, education, recreation, religion, school, marriage, carnivals, Sheep Fair, cattle market, cider making, farm sales, card games, Sunday school, auctions.

**Gloria Manning**

Kings Nympton

Farming patterns and practices

**Hettie Sargeant**

Dolton

Royal Oak Dolton, village life

**Basil Madge**

Exbourne

Exbourne, farming practices, skinning animals, hedging

**Mary Hindson**

Hatherleigh

Hatherleigh, veterinary practice, farmers and vets, WI

**Robin Ravilious**

Chulmleigh

Addisford cottage, life with James Ravilious, photography, bringing up a family, Devon rural life

**Robin & Ella Ravilious**

Chulmleigh

Techniques and aesthetics of photography. Plus family memories

**Pamela Down**

Chulmleigh

Farming, Farmers wife's work, James Ravilious and Spittle Farm

**Pat Bright and Mary**

**Louise Dunn**

Beaford

Beaford Arts in the 1960s to 90s, farming, training horses, Beaford Revel, organised religion in the village.

**David Down**

Iddesleigh

Farming, Iddesleigh

**Paul and Sue Bailey**

Burrington

Changing community life, village shops, farming, church, flower shows, thatching and reed, post office, post master/mistress

**Roland and Bryant**

**Saunders**

Kings Nympton

Kings Nympton, village life, pubs, farming, dialects, dairy ('milk sniffing')

**Barry and Sue Fewing**

Chulmleigh

Chulmleigh, Carpentry, work in Ravilious house, James Ravilious, photograph of the abseiling from tower

**Stephen and Susan**

**Squire**

Dowland

Dairy farming, hedging, wedding

**Horace and Glenice**

**Beer**

Monkleigh

Mixed farming, schooldays, Bideford

**Sally Vick**

Hatherleigh

Hatherleigh Market

**John and Brian Down**

Chulmleigh

Farming, rural youth culture, farming communities and dairy farming.

**Ian Rose**

Atherington

Moving from the east End of London to North Devon in early teens, apprenticeship to a thatcher, rugby, hunting, thatching

**Ron Acland**

Shebbear

Shebbear, Devils stone, Shebbear College, father the village cobbler, Shebbear Church

**Mary Cobbledick**

Torrington

Torrington, farming, Young farmers national dressmaking champion, bringing up a family in Torrington, business ventures (animal foods and holiday cottages), WI locally regionally and nationally

**Peter Banbury**

Iddesleigh

Iddesleigh Friendly Society, mixed farming - changing practices, environmental issues.

**Wayne Reed**

Hollocombe

Farming, youth culture 1970-1990

**John Fairchild**

Monkokehampston

Rural undertaker



**Wendy Isaac**  
Kings Nympton

Farming for the perspective of someone who was not from a farming family, mixed farming, foot and mouth disease

**Rowena Hoare**  
Kings Nympton  
Teaching, village schools (Kings Nympton and Winkleigh, Chulmleigh) legal changes around teaching, safeguarding, Health and Safety

**Sue Jury**  
Dolton  
Fairgrounds, travelling, Showman's Guild, sweet making, role of girls, family, James Ravilious

**Joyce Brock**  
Winkleigh  
Winkleigh, family history, farm labourer's wife, tied cottages, Winkleigh fair, Winkleigh Christmas dinner, bell ringing

**Derek and Margaret Miller**  
Winkleigh  
Farming, Winkleigh, Young Farmers' club, farming

**Marcia Butt & Valerie Bissett**  
Winkleigh  
Winkleigh, hairdressing, changes to the village

**Michael Guegan**  
Appledore  
Maritime issues Appledore

**Brian Butler**  
Barnstaple  
Early history, butchery trade, Butchers' Row Barnstaple - changes 1970 - present.

**Francis Hancock**  
Landkey  
Early history, owning his farm, relationship with father, schooldays, apples and orchards

**Chris Chapman**  
Throwleigh  
Personal history, photography, friendship with James Ravilious, what makes 'best & good' photographs

**John Hurford**  
Chulmleigh  
Farming, school days, importance of art, time in London, Chulmleigh, hunting (Farmers' hunt - stags, Fox hunting)

**Liz Shakespeare**  
Littleham  
Early memories, grandfather Friendship's café in Bideford Pannier market, leaving and returning to North Devon, rearing children, establishing playgroups

**John Pavitt**  
Appledore  
Appledore, shipyards, pilot boats, the lifeboat

**Rick Smale**  
Torrington  
Motorbikes, sold motor bikes to James Ravilious, Photography and James Ravilious

**Steve Lock**  
Fremington  
River Taw, father was water-bailiff, salmon fishing, piloting gigs, managing pubs.

**Jenny Marsen**  
South Molton  
District nursing, South Molton

**Ron Turner**  
Burrington  
Garage work, buses, taxis, heavy snow in the 1970s, James Ravilious

**Stewart Patterson**  
Eastacombe  
Tenant farming, Fremington, apprenticeship as slaughterman, work in slaughterhouses.

**Group interview 1:**  
"Agricultural Land Management 1970-1990 in North Devon" Michael Winter Peter Banbury, Lisa Schneidau, Gordon

Short, Stephen Squire, Alan Fraser-Smith  
**Group interview 2:**  
"Celebrations in North Devon 1970-1990: carnivals, fairs and faith" Nicola Frost, Deborah Laing-Trengrove, Peter Banbury, Deborah Phillips, Andrew Ware, Geoffrey Cleverdon, Alison Tamplin, Carolyn Kelly, John Carvosso

**Group interview 3:**  
'Economic and Commercial Life in rural North Devon 1970-1990' Paul Brassley, Geoffrey Clapp, John Nott, Jennifer Gooding, John Pavitt, Mike Sampson

**Group interview 4:**  
'Daily life in rural North Devon 1970-1990' - women's group Jo Little, Susan Squire, Margaret Bolt, Mary Cobbledick, Jean Madge, Jenny Marsen, Karin Barton

**Group interview 5:**  
'Daily life in rural North Devon 1970-1990' - women's group part two Jo Little, Susan Squire, Margaret Bolt, Mary Cobbledick, Jean Madge, Jenny Marsen,

**Karin Barton**  
**Mr and Mrs Nancekivell**  
Dolton  
Pilot interview conducted February 2015

**Truda Lane**  
Beaford  
Pilot interview conducted 23rd March 2015

**Pat Bright and Louise Dunn**  
Beaford  
Pilot interview conducted 23rd March 2015

Childhood memories, growing up in Beaford, WW2 and its effect on Beaford and Pat as a clerk in the Middle East, Orchard theatre, Henry Bright - horse breaking, Farmers' hunt, Beaford taxi service, changes in village life.



# The War Generation

**From:** Shane Greer <[shane@wargen.org](mailto:shane@wargen.org)>

**Subject:** The War Generation Project (WarGen)

I'm writing in my capacity as coordinator of WarGen. [www.wargen.org](http://www.wargen.org)

WarGen was founded by broadcaster and historian, Dan Snow, and author and broadcaster, James Holland. That amazing generation who lived and fought through the Second World War is slipping away, their numbers dwindling daily. All too soon, there will be none left at all and World War II, like those conflicts before it, will fall out of living memory.

It is of vital importance that we capture as many memories while we still have the chance. Once they have gone, they have gone. Those men and women will not be able to speak to us from beyond the grave. But while they are still living, they remain crucially important witnesses to the most cataclysmic war the world has ever known.

## We Need Your Help!

Help us to find these surviving veterans and civilians, and to then sit down with them and record their testimonies. Their life stories. They have incredible tales to tell – these ordinary men, women, and children and from all countries who were caught up in something completely beyond their control. Ordinary people made to do extraordinary things.

This generation is so important. The Second World War was an incredible and destructive war – every man woman and child was involved in that conflict. We need a record of these guys before it's too late. Once they've gone that's it, their memories will have gone with them. Help us capture their stories.

*Dan Snow*

We want people to record interviews with a generation that is slipping away. Help us collect the stories of people that experienced the Second World War from all around the world. Help us record their stories before it's too late.

*James Holland*