

## Archives for all?

The principle which we always follow in collecting archives for future research is that they are for the benefit of everyone - past, present, and future - without distinction of race, creed, colour, or other artificial distinctions between people. However, because of the way in which most records are created, and in particular their 'institutional bias', there is always a danger that they will give a slanted view of history and will favour some sections of society over others.

It is not simply that history is written by the winners - more that some social groups (particularly the aristocracy, criminals, and the very poor) tend to generate more records than others. Some groups, because of society's attitude towards them, or because of their own fear of the consequences of interaction with social institutions, can become marginalized and difficult to trace.

The year 2007 marks two anniversaries, apparently unrelated, which illustrate the limitations of the official record for building up an accurate picture of the society which it represents.

The first is the Slave Trade Abolition Act, passed on 25 March 1807, which outlawed the trade in the British Empire (slavery itself was not abolished until 1833). The passing of the Act has been widely commemorated in Devon and elsewhere this year, most recently in Todd Gray's book *Devon and the Slave Trade*, which was launched at Great Moor House on 24 September. Devon's connection with slavery is complex, and the legacy of slavery makes it a difficult subject to approach, but our more recent history would have been very different without it.

We know from research conducted by the Friends of Devon's Archives that there were black people living in Devon from the late 16th century, but their histories can only be pieced



together from isolated references. Devon has played host to visitors, temporary and permanent, from many parts of the world, and the mix of ethnic origins is greater today than ever, but they are unevenly represented in the county's written records.

The second anniversary is of the Sexual Offences Act 1967, which partly decriminalized homosexual behaviour. Again the subjects of the legislation were people whose activities put them outside the mainstream of society and encouraged a degree of secrecy. We can find out something about sexual activity in the past from the records of the criminal and ecclesiastical courts, but personal records, which might give more detail, have not generally found their way into county record offices.

The Intercom Trust, which supports gay, lesbian, bisexual, and trans-sexual people and communities throughout the South West, has appointed, with funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund, a Heritage Project Co-ordinator for eighteen months to research the histories of individual people and create collections of archival material. Although this is not easy, it is possible to start with a few notorious case studies, such as that of Mary Hamilton, who posed as a male doctor and was tried at Glastonbury in 1746. The hope is that other stories will emerge to fill in some of the gaps in the picture.

February 2008 is LGBT History Month, devoted to research into this hidden area of the history of the South West Peninsula. A travelling exhibition, '1967 and all that', will be on display for a time at Great Moor House.

These anniversaries of landmarks in social change give us the opportunity to re-examine our written history, and fill in some of the gaps left intentionally or unwittingly in the past.

## Acquisitions of Special Interest, Exeter

Between the start of April and the end of September, the Exeter office received its usual varied and interesting range of accessions.

Parish records were deposited by Alphington (7042), Bampton (6998), Berry Pomeroy (6993), Bicton (7090), Bigbury (7019), Broadhempston (7003), Buckerell (7055), East Budleigh (7089), Burlescombe (7073), Chagford (7036), St. David's, Exeter (6980, 7034), Halberton (7074), Ipplepen (6975), Kilmington (7093), Marldon (6992), Sampford Peverell (7072), Seaton (6977, 7091), Thelbridge (7071), Uffculme (7020) and Wembworthy (7041).

Other collections of church records were received from the Exeter (7048, 7049), Newton Abbot (7037) and Tavistock (7050) Methodist Circuits, while a collection of material relating to the Membury Society of Friends (7045) was deposited privately and we also received a large collection of records relating to the Exeter Hebrew Congregation (7002).

Parish council records were acquired from East Budleigh with Bicton (7082), Rewe (7056), Stoke Canon (7057) and Whitestone (7032).

Other official deposits were received from Devon County Council (6990), Devon Social Services (7058), the Exeter and Greater Devon Coroner (7078) and the Torbay and South Devon Coroner (7063).

School records were received which relate to Chawleigh Primary School (7039) and Stokeinteighhead Primary School (7026).

Records relating to a range of families have been received, including the Shorts, of Bickham, in the parish of Kenn (7046) and the Newcombes of Exeter (6988).

Another deposit of business records relating to the Exeter ironmongers F. Parkin and Son Ltd. (7022) has been received, and medical provision within the county is reflected by some very good early records of the West of England Eye

Infirmery (including minutes of the institution's benefactors and subscribers from 1808 and Governor's Committee minutes from 1812 to 1942) which came to us as part of a larger collection of health-related material which was collected from Dean Clarke House in Southernhay (6921). We have also received some additional records which relate to Exminster Hospital (7021), Redhills Hospital, Exeter (7064), and the Royal Western Counties Institution, better known as Starcross Hospital (7025).



An unusual and interesting collection which casts important light on a distinctive period in the political history of Exeter and the United Kingdom as a whole is the series of copies of newspapers issued by the British Union of Fascists between 1935 and 1940 (7016) which belonged to the Exeter

branch of the organisation and were deposited at the end of May.

The range of recreational activities in the county is represented by deposits from the Devon Federation of Young Farmers' Clubs (7035, 7053), the Chulmleigh Young Farmers' Club (7067) and the Whipton Choral Society (7084).

Among other collections deposited over the past few months we have received some deeds, abstracts of title and other papers relating to The Keep, at Mount Boone in Dartmouth (6996), some records of the Exmouth Seamen's Mission and Sailors' Rest dating from 1899 to 1986 (7008) and the Exmouth YMCA from 1889 to 1967 (7009). A couple of minute books of the Dartmouth United Shipping Association, covering the period between 1832 and 1854 (7087), were donated to the office in June by a gentleman in Taunton to whom they had been passed through his family.

Not all these records are yet available for consultation. We shall endeavour to make them accessible as soon as possible, and staff will be happy to advise about the accessibility of a particular collection.

## Acquisitions of Special Interest, Barnstaple



**Instow Football Club and supporters, c1921, from a photograph deposited in the North Devon Record Office (B882)**

Since the previous edition of this newsletter, the North Devon Record Office has received additional deposits of records from the following Church of England parishes: Bishops Nympton (596), Georgeham (2567), Hartland (1201), Mariansleigh (B564), Rose Ash (B678) and Tawstock (2288). The Bishops Nympton material includes an interesting handwritten instruction book for churchwardens, compiled in 1827 with additions of 1847.

Additional nonconformist records have been received from the Ilfracombe (2334), Ringsash (2405) and South Molton (2506) Methodist Circuits. The latter deposit includes a large quantity of material relating to individual chapels in the circuit.

Official records have been transferred from the parish councils of Braunton (B869), Goodleigh (B775) and Monkleigh (B673). The Braunton deposit includes records dating from the formation of the parish councils in 1894 and a large amount of Braunton parish records. Governors' meetings minutes have been received from Our Lady's Catholic Primary School, Barnstaple (B878).

Other deposits of note include business records of Youngs & Son, stonemasons of Barnstaple, dating back to 1865 (B883), minutes of the Torrington Co-operative Society, 1955-1967 (B887), a photograph of players and supporters of Instow Football Club taken around 1921, complete with a comprehensive list of names of those appearing in it (B882) and family and estate papers of the Loveband family of Yarnscombe (B885). The latter collection includes deeds dating from 1455 and was originally deposited for a short time for cataloguing in the Devon Record Office, then occupying premises in County Hall, Exeter, in 1964.

Please note that some of the collections listed above have not yet been catalogued in detail and so are not available for consultation at present. We advise that you check the availability of material with staff at the North Devon Record Office.

# Conservation of an 18th Century Account Book

Rebecca Saunders, Conservator, Devon Record Office

The volume, part of a collection belonging to the Ford Family of Branscombe in East Devon, is an account book comprising columns of dates, names and quantities of lime ash sold in different parishes for a series of years in the late 18th century.

## Documentation, Disbinding and Cleaning

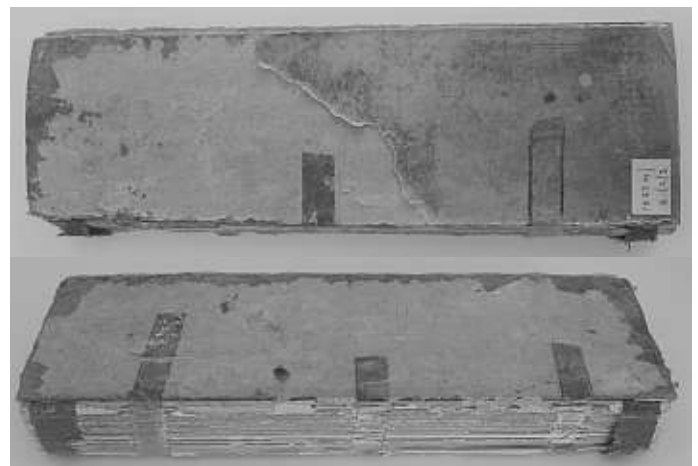
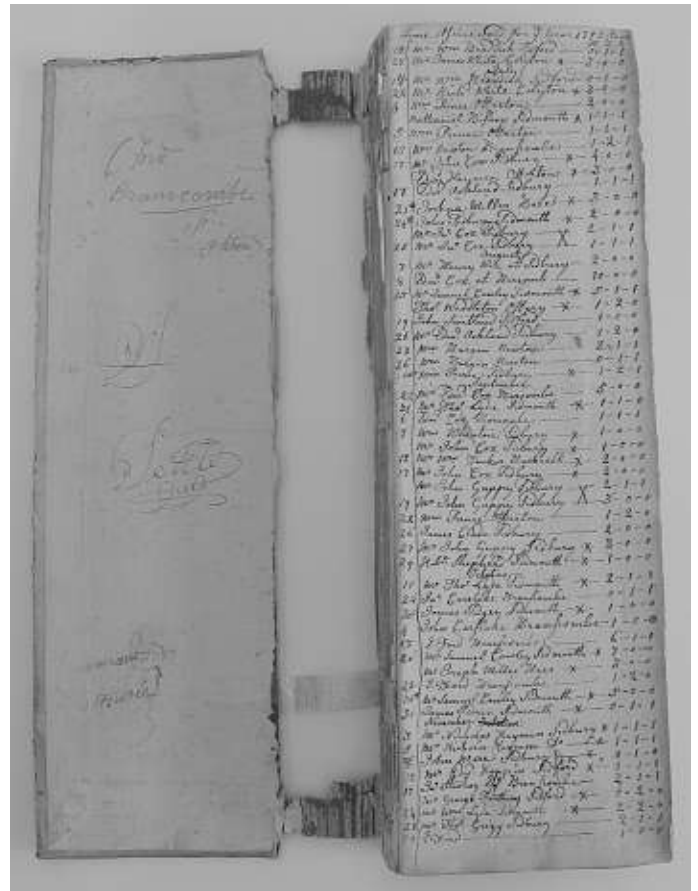
The account book is a long, narrow volume of good quality laid paper. Every page bears neat handwriting in iron gall ink. This characteristic brown coloured ink was used from medieval times through to the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century and in this case, like the paper, is mostly in very good condition. The principal problem with the volume is the deterioration of the original sewing and binding.

The book comprises 12 sections, each of 8 folio [folded] sheets. The book was sewn on three parchment tapes, but only the head and tail kettle stitches are still intact. Without re-sewing, pages or even whole sections could easily become loose. At various points in the book there are folio sheets which have separated, or are very close to doing so. Interestingly (and for reasons unknown), there are also several pages near the end of the book which have been intentionally knotted together to prevent opening.

Other details about the original binding had to be deduced from the few fragments remaining and from comparison with contemporary volumes. The thin boards were first covered in paper followed by a piece of parchment, only about half of which still remained on the front cover. Unfortunately, nothing remains of the spine to indicate how it was formed or what text or decoration it may have had.

At some point a kindly soul had also been let loose with the sellotape! Whilst this may have prevented the book's untimely demise, it did a leave nasty, sticky residue.

Following photographs, diagrams and detailed documentation (a very important part of conservation work!), the text block was removed from its boards and the sections disbound. As expected, the stitching was very weak and easily came away, but the sections were attached to



one another by glue which had to be scraped away.

Each page was carefully cleaned using a soft-bristle brush to remove material accumulated in the page gutters. In some places this amounted to a considerable amount of shiny grey iron particles from the ink, quill shavings, hair, red sealing wax fragments, bits of degraded thread and paper, at least one dead insect and general dust matter. The quantity of material from one small book was huge.

## Repairing and Re-sewing

All sections were then correctly collated ready for re-sewing. The outer folios of each section had suffered badly and were too weakened by holes to allow re-sewing. The outside of each fold was reinforced with a narrow strip of *Lens tissue*, applied with rice starch paste, whilst the inside of the fold was strengthened with much finer *RKO tissue*. The more substantial holes in the folds were infilled with Japanese *Tonosawa* paper.

Before re-sewing, the loose pages at the front and back of the book had to be made into folio sheets once more. This was done using an English paper, *Old Cleeve*. The shape of the damaged edge was traced onto the repair piece using a needle, then wet cut to achieve both a good shape match and as many fibres as possible to aid attachment to the original.

Three parchment sewing supports were set up on a frame, and the original sewing stations for the tapes and kettle stitches used to re-sew the book, using a thin linen thread.

## Reconstructing the Parchment Binding

Having repaired all the damaged paper and re-sewn the book, the next task was to tackle the binding. The remaining parchment on the cover and underneath the pastedowns [on the insides of the boards] was gently lifted, as was enough paper to allow the new sewing supports to be inserted.

Following experimentation using manila and then scrap parchment, a template was made for a new parchment cover. This had to be quite generous to allow easy opening and good-sized squares, but not so large as to be loose. A section also had to be cut away to allow the remaining piece of the original cover to be visible. The spine was lined with a strip of natural linen, to somewhat match the colour of the boards, and to provide additional support.

The repaired and re-sewn text block and the renovated parchment cover were ready for reassembling. The parchment sewing thongs and cloth spine reinforcements were glued down onto the inside of the boards and the pastedowns reapplied. The step created by the boards was then softened by a narrow strip of Japanese *Bunkoshi* paper and the workings of the hinge hidden under a narrow strip of the same *Old Cleeve* paper used for the new endpapers.



The new covering was applied using reversible PVA and starch paste. The turn-ins were glued down underneath the pastedowns and remaining parchment. Making new parchment stick securely to the old caused some problems – solved with the aid of many bulldog clips!

An acid-free manila folder was made-to-measure for the storage of the document. Included in this was a small pocket in which some of the fragments (parchment sewing supports, degraded thread and cloth spine reinforcement) preserved during conservation were placed.



The conservation of this item was carried out to coincide with the annual exhibition of family and village research in Branscombe.

## Explore North Devon: the story so far

Explore North Devon is an Archives 4 All project funded by a Your Heritage grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund with additional funding from Natural England through the North Devon Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty. Project partners working with the Devon Record Office are North Devon and Torrington District Councils' museums' service, the Northern Devon Coast and Countryside Service and The National Archives. For the past year we have been working with five community groups in the northern Devon area to develop their collections of local history information, encourage the involvement of residents in contributing new material and digitise the resulting data to populate a web-based resource linked to the popular Access to Archives (A2A) website at [www.a2a.org.uk](http://www.a2a.org.uk). The communities involved in the project are Bratton Fleming, Hartland, Morteohoe, Parracombe and Winkleigh.

The last few months have been busy with training sessions for volunteers on issues such as copyright, digitisation, cataloguing, oral history recording and data transfer. Laptops, scanners, printers, cameras and voice recorders have been purchased and installed in each community and training given in their use. Meanwhile, development of the project database and website design has progressed swiftly under the skilful expertise of Ken Laing of Information Sciences. We are now two thirds of the way through the project, and the first sets of data collected



Visitors to the Explore North Devon stand at XArch Community Archaeology Day at Hartland Methodist Hall, September 2007

by our community groups have just 'gone live' with the recent launch of our website, [www.explorenorthdevon.org.uk](http://www.explorenorthdevon.org.uk). To publicise the project further, a series of awareness sessions on using both our web resource and the A2A site have been held in libraries throughout northern Devon and we participated in this year's North Devon Arts Festival with a touring exhibition entitled 'Let's Party', looking at local celebrations past and present, at which people were encouraged to bring along photographs or other information to be scanned into the Explore North Devon database.

Future plans include creating content specific to the communities lying within the North Devon Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, increasing the quantity and range of material collected for each community, working with local schools on content creation projects, transferring data to the A2A resource, developing links with related heritage projects and, not least, exploring new funding opportunities to enable us to extend the inspiring and



Explore North Devon 'Let's Party' event held at The King's Arms, Winkleigh, June 2007



rewarding work we have been able to undertake with our five communities to other parts of our unique and much visited region. Our long-term goal is to develop an accessible resource offering quality information about the northern Devon area that has something to appeal to all kinds of user, from the casual visitor through to the academic researcher. We will be presenting our results in a series of roadshows at the conclusion of this phase of the project in Spring 2008. Further details will appear on our website in due course.

**For more information on the Explore North Devon project, or if you have something you would like to contribute, please contact Tim Wormleighton at the North Devon Record Office.**

## Heritage Open Days



Once again the Devon Record Office flung open its doors to invite members of the public to explore behind the scenes and discover the hidden gems in the archive collection. This included a look at some colourful maps of Exeter and documents dating back 900 years. The conservation studios were another highlight of the tour with a fascinating glimpse at how damaged documents can be preserved, including water damaged parchment from the Blitz. One visitor commented:

*'Thank you for a great opportunity to see some of the unsung sterling work that is done behind the scenes by you and your staff and to sneak a peek at such a wonderful collection... I was aware of the scope of the records available in Devon, but today's visit has made me realise just how vast a collection you and your staff manage, something which you have every right to be proud of. I'm looking forward to coming and using the record office to satisfy my curiosity over some of the research I did for my degree and taking advantage of such an impressive collection.'*

The Devon Record Office welcomed 40 people to its Heritage Open Days and with such a positive response, looks forward to welcoming back some new researchers in the near future.

## English Riviera Heritage Day



The Friends of Oldway Group hosted their first Heritage Day on Sunday 16<sup>th</sup> September, to promote the rich heritage of the Torbay area.

The event, attended by 18 local heritage groups, was held at Oldway Mansion in Paignton. This grade II listed mansion was originally owned by Isaac Singer, the founder of the Singer Sewing Machine Company, who modelled the building on the Palace of Versailles with other areas inspired by the Place de la Concorde in Paris.

Amongst the exhibitors, the Devon Record Office was on hand to provide local people with the opportunity to find out more about the collections held at Great Moor House and how they could access information through a number of service points in their local area.

The event attracted over 500 people and was hailed a great success. An even bigger Heritage Day is being planned for next year.

## Discover History Days



The Devon Record Office, the Devon Family History Society and the Westcountry Studies Library teamed up to visit Honiton on Wednesday 19<sup>th</sup> September for the ever popular Discover History Day. On board the vehicle were a team of archivists, librarians and family historians, giving advice about family history research and how to access local historical resources. Archivists were also present at Colyton on 26<sup>th</sup> September to provide advice to local researchers.

## Book Launch at the Devon Record Office

The Devon Record Office hosted the launch of a new book by leading Devon historian Todd Gray on Monday 24th September. Todd Gray's *Devon and the Slave Trade* has been published with the support of Devon County Council as part of its recognition of the bicentenary of the abolition of the slave trade in the British Empire.

Historic Devon documents relating to the slave trade were also on display. They included a unique 440-year-old manuscript granting a coat of arms to John Hawkins, who was born in Plymouth and is generally held to be England's first slave-trader. The Chairman of Devon County Council, Councillor Brenda Taylor, and the Executive Member for Culture, Councillor Sheila Hobden, joined guests from around the county for this special event.



## A la Ronde

A la Ronde hosted a Free Entry and Family History Day in conjunction with the Devon Record Office and Exmouth Family History Club on Saturday 8th September. The day was a great opportunity to visit the house and gave visitors the chance to find out how to begin researching their family history. The event was a great success, with over 400 visitors in attendance.



## A New Face at Exeter



Welcome to Katherine Weston, who took up the post of Heritage Outreach Officer in August, in succession to Philippe Planel. Katherine is putting her experience at Tiverton and Exeter Museums and the Cathedral to good use on behalf of the Record Office and Devon's museums. We are delighted that she has joined the team.

## Friends of Devon's Archives

On 25th June we presented a Film Archive Night held in Silverton Village Hall. This was a joint event with Silverton Local History Society. It proved to be a very popular event and was very successful. Elayne Hoskin of the South-West Film and Television Archive introduced a programme of archive film relevant to the Silverton area.

**WE ARE LOOKING FOR LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETIES TO HOST**

### FURTHER FILM ARCHIVE NIGHTS

If your society is interested please telephone 01803 863816 or email: [jill.drysdale@btinternet.com](mailto:jill.drysdale@btinternet.com)

Our AGM and Conference was held on Saturday 20th October at County Hall, Exeter, from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. The theme of the conference this year was "Watching Over You", and the intention was to look at archives which are not available to the general public. Speakers included Dr Todd Gray, Angela Sutton Vane and Nicole Baur.

The day event in Plymouth entitled "Plymouth: Stories from the Sea" will take place at MARJON on Saturday 17th November from 10a.m. to 4p.m. Speakers will include Sam Johnston, Dr Todd Gray, Nigel Overton and Charles Crichton. Elayne Hoskin will be there to present some more archive film of Plymouth.

There will be four workshops in November held jointly with the Devonshire Association and application forms for these and the Plymouth event above will be sent to members in October.

**Any Comments?**

*This newsletter is edited by John Draisey, County Archivist & Brian Carpenter, Archivist, Devon Record Office, Great Moor House, Bittern Road, Sowton, EXETER, Devon, EX2 7NL, UK and is published by Devon County Council. If you have any comments or suggestions on this newsletter please send them to the above address or e-mail: [devrec@devon.gov.uk](mailto:devrec@devon.gov.uk).*