

NEWSLETTER

Issue 30 November 2002

TIME TO CONSULT

We are regularly urged nowadays to consult about almost everything, and this is part of the drive for democratic accountability which is a feature of modern public life. The way in which public services are delivered now is certainly a great improvement on some past regimes, in which the convenience of the provider often took precedence over the needs of the recipient. All decision-making processes are now to be subjected to public scrutiny, through Best Value, through the Freedom of Information Act, and through a variety of other mechanisms, and the public are regularly bombarded with questionnaires and survey forms, most of which end up in the waste paper bin. There is a danger that public bodies will acquire a reputation for spending time and resources on consultation which could be going into providing better services, while the poor return rate for many exercises can make the results almost useless.

The Devon Record Office is taking part in the fourth Public Services Quality Group Survey of Visitors to British Archives, in addition to which we have recently been involved in a social impact audit of the service point scheme and have had questions about our public profile included in the Devon County Council Corporate Survey. Our recent Best Value inspection included focus groups of staff and of users and non-users, and the inspectors spoke to visitors to the offices and asked them what was good and bad about the service. One of their recommendations was that we consult more than we now, and specifically that we consult our stakeholders (that is everyone with an interest in the Record Office) in the course of preparing our annual service action plan and setting targets.

The word 'consult' has many shades of meaning: you can consult together (or even on your own) about something, you can consult with someone else, or you can consult someone else in order to obtain advice (as when you consult a lawyer or a doctor). The word can also mean to have respects to someone's interests when forming plans, and this seems the most helpful sense, for it concentrates on the outcome of consultation, not the process.

THE SHAPE OF THINGS TO COME

In this Issue

[Acquisitions of Special Interest](#)
[Friends of Devon's Archives](#)
[Penelope Lively Launches new Exmoor Archive](#)
[Parish Church Inspections](#)
[Clergy of the Church of England Database](#)
[Great Moor House...
...And Great Moor Farm](#)
[News from the Service Points](#)
[Devon Maps & Map-Makers](#)
[Millennium Domesday Staff Changes at Barnstaple](#)
[Questionnaire](#)

This newsletter includes a brief [questionnaire](#) about the Record Office and the Friends of Devon's Archives. The questions in both cases concern the future, not the present, and they are intended to give our readers an opportunity to help us shape the two organizations in years to come. The move to Great Moor House will inevitably bring about change for the Record Office. Many of our present practices are governed by the eccentricities of the buildings in which we now operate, and we shall be presented in 2004 with, if not a clean sheet, at least a range of different possibilities, any of which might make life better or worse for those who use the office.

Most of the questions involve a choice. We expect to increase opening hours, but, even with extra staff, it will not be possible, for example, to open until 8.00 at night for six days a week – to do so would involve neglecting other work, which would eventually damage the public service. Similarly, it would be too expensive to duplicate all the resources now available in the Westcountry Studies Library, nor would we wish to set up a second local studies library at Sowton, but there are sources which need to be close at hand when carrying out documentary research, and we hope to provide these. It is very unlikely that we shall get all the answers right at the first attempt, and in any case the pattern of use will change over time, so we shall need to consult again at a later date, to find out what modifications are needed.

FRIENDS FOR THE FUTURE

In the case of the Friends, it is not easy to know what our members expect from the organization, and only a limited amount can be deduced from attendance at different kinds of event. Why, for example, was last year's AGM so much better attended than this year's, or why are some of the evening talks at the Institution more popular than others? It may be to do with the subject matter, the time, the place, or competition from other events, but we can do something about all of these, if we know what members would like. Friends groups have many different emphases and functions, and the Devon Friends have established a character of their own, with a clear focus on research, but we have never been able to see with any certainty the way ahead, and this is an opportunity for you to make your views known.

The important fact which underlies all this is that no organization exists for itself alone. The Friends are there to serve the whole membership, existing and potential, and, through publications and other activities, the wider community; the Record Office is there to serve Devon County Council and Torbay Council, the depositors (including our two funding authorities, Exeter City Council, the Diocese of Exeter, and all the corporate and individual owners and donors of documents), the thousands of researchers (both individuals and groups) who visit us every year and will continue to do so in the future, and everyone who reads a book or a newspaper or watches a television programme which incorporates the results of research in Devon's archives. Keeping the needs and interests of all these people in mind when formulating our plans is not easy, but that is our task, and that is what we will always try to do.

MORE QUESTIONS

There is of course no obligation to complete the questionnaire, but it does offer an opportunity to make your wishes known; nor does it duplicate the other surveys which have been and are being done, for it is concerned with specific questions about future developments. If you would like to complete one of the forms and either post it back to us or drop it in to one of the offices, we will be pleased to know your views and will take them into account when decisions come to be made about the issues mentioned. We shall never be able to please everyone, but the more information we have the nearer we can get to an ideal solution.

[Return to top of page](#)

ACQUISITIONS OF SPECIAL INTEREST:

EXETER

The Exeter office received 125 new deposits between 1 May and 31 October.

Forty of these were of parish records, largely thanks to Gillian Falla's continuing visits to parish churches, with additional deposits from Venn Ottery (D 2428 add), Peter Tavy (D 1427 add 5), Stoke Fleming (D 1342 add 15), Blackawton (D 995 add 8), Sowton (D 780 add 3), Morchard Bishop (D 2943 adds 6 & 7), Washford Pyne (D 1375 add 4), Down St Mary (D 2927 add 2), East Woolfardisworthy (D 452 add 4), Sampford Courtenay (D 1232 add 3), Honeychurch (D 1233 add 2), Kingston (D 1676 add 3), Woodleigh (D 2928 add), Exbourne (D 3326 add 3), Meeth (D 2388 add 5), Rackenford (D 2984 add 5), Monkton (D 2892 add 5), Combe Raleigh (D 567 add 2), Clyst Hydon (D 4021 add 6), Harberton (D 333 add 3), North Huish (D 3094 add 2), Starcross (D 3113 add 7), Bulkworthy (D 2964 add), Abbots Bickington (D 2965 add), West Putford (D 2969 add), East Putford (D 2970 add 3), Bradworthy (D 2967 add 2), Sutcombe (D 2968 add 2), East Ogwell (D 2952 add 3), Chevithorne (D 2986 add 3), Withleigh (D 2987 add 3), Washfield (D 1146 add 3), Cruwys Morchard (D 1092 add 8), Templeton (D 1556 add 3), Chudleigh (D 3009 add), Ilsington (D 4289 add), Ottery St Mary (D 3327 add 6), and Churston Ferrers (D 1235 add 4) and a first deposit from Dean Prior (D 6231) which includes the registers from 1557.

There were also ten non-conformist deposits, from Exeter (D 3080 adds 35 & 36), Totnes (D 2275 add 12), Tavistock (D 2276 add 18), Chagford (D 2200 add 8), Tiverton (D 2514 add 34), and Kingsbridge and Salcombe (D 3075 add 5) Methodist circuits and from Tavistock URC (D 6208), Salcombe Baptist Church (D 6230), and Abbey Road URC, Torquay (D 6248).

There were not many official deposits this time, though Stoke Fleming Parish Council contributed minutes from 1894 to 1999 (D 6228), and Dunkeswell Parish Council sent in some recent minutes and accounts (D 5128 add). Also in this category belong the papers received and created by the Devon Foot and Mouth Inquiry (D 6233),

which form a remarkable record of a painful piece of recent history.

Family and estate records also were not very plentiful, though additional deposits were received from the Ellis family of Chagford (D 5919 add), including rent rolls and court rolls, 1796-1921, and the Fortescues of Castle Hill (D 1262 add 9), a large collection of deeds and estate papers, as well as an extensive and unusual collection of papers of the Evelegh family (D 6269), which came ready sorted and listed. The album of photographs and cuttings relating to Sir Redvers Buller, 1900-1924, (D 6245) is really a miscellaneous deposit but adds to our collections for that family.

The collection of deeds and papers, from the 17th to the 20th century, of the 'First and Last' in St Thomas (D 6265) properly belong among the business records, where they are joined by the ledgers and day books of F Parkin & Son Ltd (D 6234 & add) and a payments journal, 1935-1969, of Wyatt, builder, of Aveton Gifford (D 6260).

There is an interesting group of deposits from clubs and societies, including minutes, 1965-1994, of the Exeter and District Battalion of the Boys' Brigade (D 6197), minutes, 1950-2000, and accounts, 1966-1977, of the Stoke Fleming Horticultural and Sports Society (D 6235), an account of the first seventy years of the Devon D A Touring Cyclists' Club (D 6250), minutes, 1980-1999, of the Exeter Leukaemia Research Fund (D 6268), and records of Lapford (D 6226), Cruwys Morchard (D 6224), Littleham (Exmouth) (D 6246), and Stoke Gabriel (D 6259) Women's Institutes.

The miscellaneous deposits are not as varied or unusual as they sometime are, though the early 20th-century group photograph with a painting of a cat and dog on the back (D 6126) must qualify as the most surprising. Also worth mentioning are a collection of exercise books from Bishop Blackall School, Exeter, in the 1950s (D 6244), and a set of lantern slides of Sidmouth from 1934 (D 6213).

BARNSTAPLE

Since the last edition of this newsletter, additional deposits of records have been transferred to the North Devon Record Office from the following Church of England parishes: Filleigh (3335 add 2), High Bickington (2849 add 6), Marwood (3398 adds 5 & 6), Meshaw (1794 add 7), Newton St Petrock (2966 add 3), Thelbridge (1630 add 3) and Witheridge (1629 add 9). A considerable number of twentieth (and some nineteenth) century Methodist circuit plans has also been received, covering the circuits of Barnstaple (2347 add 22), Bideford (2237 add 12), Bude (2926 add 4), Hatherleigh (B668), Holsworthy (2638 add 9), Ilfracombe (2334 add 12), Northlew (B668), Okehampton (B668), Ringsash (2405 adds 4 & 5) and South Molton (2506 adds 5 & 6). In addition, further circuit and individual chapel records have been received from the Barnstaple (2347 adds 23-25) and Ilfracombe (2334 add 13) Methodist Circuits. Records of the Croyde Baptist Chapel, including church meeting minutes from 1894 to 1979, have also been transferred (B670).

Magistrates' court registers for the Borough of Barnstaple, Bideford and Torrington, Braunton and South Molton Divisions have been deposited in the Record Office (B102 add). They date from the late 1960s and early 1970s and complete our holdings of north Devon petty sessions court records that are open to public inspection under the thirty year rule laid down by the Public Record Act 1967.

A large group of papers relating to the history and administration of Lundy has been added to the collection of photographs of the island mentioned in the previous edition of this newsletter (B627 add 2). Included among the material are a number of journals kept by both residents and visitors, and photocopies of diaries kept between 1870 and 1905 by the Heaven family, owners of the island from 1834 to 1917.

A group of personal papers of the Reverend Prebendary John Frederick Chanter (1854-1939), Rector of Parracombe and a prolific writer of books and articles on the local history of Devon, provides a welcome addition to our holdings (B667). The records include a number of signed copies of many of his published works, notes on family and local history and papers relating to his properties and career in the Church of England. Chanter's name will be familiar to anyone who has used his extensive catalogue of part of the Exeter Diocesan archives, produced during his time as Honorary Archivist of Exeter Cathedral, a position he held until his death.

[Return to top of page](#)

FRIENDS OF DEVON'S ARCHIVES

This autumn's programme of events began with a talk by Clare Greener on the daily life of the Devon gardener. Using sources from Powderham, Endsleigh and Maristow gardens she gave an insight into the lives of domestic gardeners in the nineteenth century. Wages were poor, working and living conditions uncomfortable and the recommended education for young men wishing to become professional gardeners unrealistic, but the nineteenth century was a period when gardeners obtained high regard and influence.

At the AGM conference in October the business meeting was conducted in record time. Members who attended were then entertained by five individual and different talks.

Gill Selley began the programme detailing an exciting find of lace samples in April. One was a sampler edged around with trolley lace dedicated to Queen Victoria. A letter indicated that the queen had received a gift from the distressed lacemakers of Woodbury Salterton and mentioned a 'thank you' present sent from the palace. Of national importance were 700 samples of trolley lace affixed to various pieces of material. All were priced. Examples of trolley lace have been found before, though

never in such quantity, nor with prices. Gill told of her search to find the lacemakers, dealers and travellers and her endeavours to trace the history of the Victorian sampler and outlined some of the many questions about her find which still have to be answered.

This was followed by Margery Rowe and Mary Ravenhill who took turns to talk about the Devon Map Project. Margery Rowe described their six year hunt through over thirty record repositories and numerous private collections in order to compile a carto-bibliography of over 1,300 Devon maps and 100 map-makers. Mary Ravenhill then talked about the criteria used for choosing the maps included in their books. The purposes of map making were also discussed, many being made to show ownership of land or in order to settle legal disputes.

Dick Passmore explained how he had become interested in the history of the Theatre Royal, working backstage himself until it closed in 1962. He detailed the history of Exeter's early theatres at Bedford Circus and Longbrook Street, the latter built by the Exeter Theatre Company in 1886. He described the tragic fire of 1887 which led to an improvement in fire regulations in theatres throughout the country. Dick also talked about some of the famous actors and actresses who had performed in the re-built theatre and discussed some of the memorabilia he had acquired which included playbills, posters and programmes.

After lunch Robert North-Wilson stressed the importance of interdisciplinary approaches to garden history. These included field-walking, geo-physics and other mechanical surveys, traditional archaeology, the use of aerial photographs and documentary evidence and listening to local 'folk-lore'. To demonstrate these points he used slides of aerial photographs and plans of two houses to determine how a high status site, belonging to the Beckford family, had been laid out at Witham in Somerset, with vistas and a canalised river, during the eighteenth century. A later Robert Adam house was begun on a nearby site looking towards the older property. The other site he looked at was also in Somerset at Low Ham. Remodelled in 1690, surveys showed the remains of an earlier garden.

The final talk was by Dr Andrew Spicer from the University of Exeter who spoke about the fifty to sixty thousand Huguenot refugees who came to our shores during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Fleeing religious persecution in their own countries, they were welcomed into England by the British Government because as artisans, craftsmen and professional people they brought with them expertise which was much needed to help Britain's industrial activities. In order to locate where the refugees settled Andrew Spicer has looked at a variety of taxation and church records. Devon towns in which they settled or passed through were Barnstaple, Bideford, Plymouth, Dartmouth and Exeter.

A visit to Great Moor House on Friday 7 November was arranged to give Friends an opportunity to view the building before construction work begins. Friends saw a Powerpoint presentation on the project and had a chance to walk around the large

empty space which will be occupied by the new office, before sitting down to lunch in the Great Moor House dining room.

The series of workshops entitled 'Recording the People' started on the 5 November with a talk on Wills and Probate by Sue Laithwaite and Jan Wood. They covered the history of will making and probate in ecclesiastical and civil courts, gave a list of resources for tracing wills and considered the difficulties of finding information on Devon wills, many of which were destroyed by the bombing of 1942. This was a very detailed workshop containing a great deal of information and it was very useful to take home an information pack containing a transcript of the talk, and examples of the records that can be found.

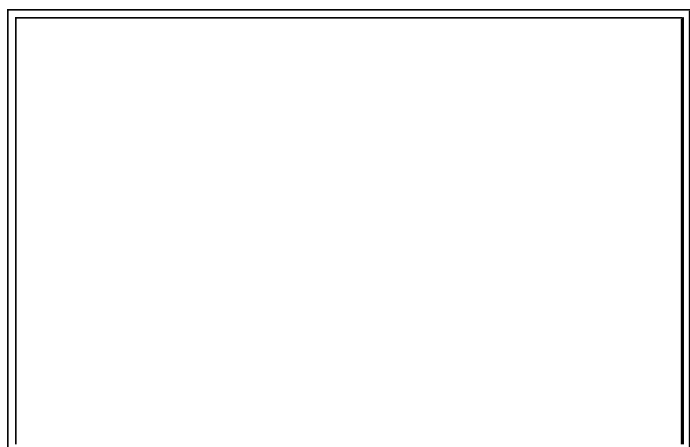
Susan Laithwaite and Jan Wood also led the second workshop on 'School Records'. This was equally interesting and informative with details of websites and printed resources. Historical details of schools from the pre-reformation period to the twentieth century were covered and included education from public schools to ragged schools in Exeter. Again transcripts and copies of documents available were distributed.

Other workshops in the series are 'Archives and the Worldwide Web', a practical session led by Ian Mortimer at the Exeter University, 'Parish Registers' by Gillian Falla and 'Census Returns and Tax Lists' by Ian Maxted.

A new Friends of Devon's Archives publication, *Maps of Georgian Devon*, a follow-up to *Early Devon Maps*, is due for publication in January 2003. It is possible to order this at a special price of £10 or copies of both volumes at the special price of £15.

Jill Drysdale will be taking over from Brian Carpenter as events secretary. Thank you to Brian for all his hard work to date. Jill says the future programme is still in the planning stage, but that she is trying hard to arrange an exciting and informative programme for next year with some interesting speakers and opportunities for members to discuss their own research.

PENELOPE LIVELY LAUNCHES NEW EXMOOR ARCHIVE



At the end of October Penelope Lively joined the Dulverton and District Civic Society to celebrate the launch of the Exmoor Archive, a major new collection of life story recordings which have now been lodged with both the Somerset and North Devon Record Offices. The occasion was marked by the publication of *Reflections: life*



Ben Norman (born Watchet, Somerset 1918)

"Yankee Jack was the most famous sailor. There were others. They weren't famous, but they were courageous men."

portraits of Exmoor, a commemorative photographic book of the contributors to the project, and the inauguration of a dedicated website hosted by the Somerset Record Office.

Over the last few years Birdie Johnson, the project consultant, has talked to 78 of Exmoor's older residents on behalf of the civic society. Blacksmith and builder, shopkeeper and chambermaid, farm worker and landed gentry **B** among many others **B** have all contributed to the archive. The result is more than 200 hours of oral testimony, which paint a vivid and diverse picture of life in the national park at the turn of the century, seen through the eyes of those who live there. 'The spoken word has a power of its own,' Birdie says, 'and a resonance which lingers in the memory. These recordings, with their rich variety of voices, capture the reality of life on Exmoor in an intriguing and often unexpected way.'

Reflections, accompanied by an audio CD of extracts from some of the recordings, is the visible face of the archive. It represents a remarkable collaboration between recorder, photographer and contributor and would not have been possible without the dedication to the project shown by Mark Rattenbury, the photographer. With his unintrusive and intuitive style, he has produced some outstanding photographs. They stimulate the imagination, linking contributor to recording, and give substance to the archive.

Penelope Lively, who has long standing family connections with Exmoor, has written a foreword to the book. She was guest of honour at the launch. As well as being a Booker prize-winning author, with a particular interest in how the past relates to the present, she is a trustee of the British Library's National Life Story Collection. As she says in her foreword, 'History springs to life when it speaks.'

The launch was a memorable event and the civic society were particularly pleased at the interest shown in the project by County Council Chairman Mary Strudwick, who was among the large number of sponsors and guests attending. Around 60 of the contributors to the archive also made the trip to Dulverton for the launch, from the oldest, Ken Baker (now 96), who still drives his 34 year old Morris Traveller, and the youngest, Arthur Heywood (64), to Dick Rawle (81), the face of the book. It was the

first time many of them had met together for years and they generated an extraordinary energy, in spite of their age. It is unlikely that such a varied assembly will ever gather together again.

The archive is supported by a dedicated website (www.somerset.gov.uk/archives/exmoor), which is being developed by Janet Tall of the Somerset Record Office. It will be maintained as part of their own site, with links to both the Devon and North Devon Record Offices. The website contains background information on the project and contributors, together with thumbnail portraits and summaries of the recordings. All summaries are expected to be in place by March 2003.

The recordings have been transferred to CD for easy audio access and can be listened to by appointment at the North Devon Record Office in Barnstaple as well as at the Somerset Record Office in Taunton. It is hoped eventually to establish more listening outlets and make clips available on the internet. Meanwhile the combination of audio CD and summary, supported by the book *Reflections*, will provide a unique memory bank, easily accessible for study and research, thereby promoting a greater understanding of Exmoor and its history, its people and countryside. It is hoped it will act as a template and inspiration to other communities wishing to capture their own vanishing way of life.

The Exmoor oral history project has been funded by the Local Heritage Initiative (a partnership between the Heritage Lottery Fund, Nationwide Building Society and the Countryside Agency). It has also received funding from the County and District Councils covering the Exmoor area, South West Arts, and a large number of other organisations.

Reflections; life portraits of Exmoor is published by the Dulverton and District Civic Society, price £14.95. It is obtainable from the Barnstaple and Exeter Record Offices and all good local bookshops or by post from Jan Ross, Dulverton and District Civic Society, 39 Jury Road, Dulverton TA22 9EJ. Please add £2.50 p&p.

PARISH CHURCH INSPECTIONS

Gillian Falla has continued to make steady progress with the new round of quinquennial inspections of parish registers and records first reported in the last newsletter. Over ninety parishes have now been visited, and several additional deposits received.

Although many of the registers and records seen this time have already been noted at previous inspections, some hitherto unrecorded items have also been found. A search for some documents recorded in 1996 but not now in the church safe at Rackenford led to the discovery of some 18th century apprenticeship indentures and a poor rate book, 1857-1859, wrapped in newspaper in an old chest of drawers. We

were also delighted to find that the second two Chawleigh registers, 1694-1742 and 1743-1812, had only just been retrieved from private hands by a local historian concerned about their future following the recent death of the custodian. These have been passed to the team rector, and it is hoped that they will soon be deposited in the Devon Record Office.

On a more disappointing note, the third register, 1742-1812, and several other parish records listed at Washford Pyne in an early DRO survey in 1958, but missing at the first inspection under the Measure in 1981, have still not been located. These incidents clearly demonstrate the reasoning behind the Parochial Registers and Records Measure, and the importance of ensuring that any parish registers and records not deposited in the DRO remain in the church at all times.

As it is impossible for the majority of churches to house even their current records within the recommended temperature and humidity range for document storage, Deborah Phillips, senior conservator, has produced a shortened version of the booklet *Stopping the Rot* designed especially for custodians of parish registers and records. With advice not only on storage, preservation and first aid for existing records, but also on choosing materials for creating new records, we hope that it will encourage good practice in the care and conservation of the registers and other records that remain in the parish.

CLERGY OF THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND DATABASE

A couple of years ago we were approached about an ambitious national project to record biographical information for all known Anglican clergy in England and Wales between 1540 and 1835 on a relational database. The project began in 1999 and is scheduled to last for five years; it is funded by the Arts and Humanities Board and coordinated by a team of project directors drawn from the universities of Kent and Reading and from King's College, London.

Three of the project directors will be visiting the Devon Record Office in Exeter during December to examine the registers of ordination and institution and the licensing and subscription books which form part of the diocesan records. The information will then be extracted by a small team of freelance researchers, who will type the details on to laptop computers in the searchroom, for which they will be paid a fixed fee. The database will eventually be published both on CD-ROM and on-line, with an explanatory introduction by the project directors.

For much of the period under consideration the Church of England was the single most important employer of educated males in England and Wales, and anyone who has tried to track down an 18th-century curate will know how elusive some of these men are. The database will be an invaluable research tool for the history of church and state and for biographical details of this significant group of people. For anyone who wants to know more about the project there is an interesting article in

Archives, volume XXVII, number 107, October 2002, which explains its origins and development.

[Return to top of page](#)

GREAT MOOR HOUSE...

After four years of planning, designing, Lottery applications, tendering, and of course consultation, the beginning of construction work at Great Moor House is now imminent. Tenders for the main contract have been received and evaluated, and building work should start in early December. The Friends were the latest group to walk round the empty warehouse and try to imagine what it will look like when it is full of masonry and furniture. That area will now be sealed off for the eighteen months which the building work will take. However, a web camera will be installed in the building, partly as a security measure and partly so that anyone who is interested can keep an eye on progress.

...STOP PRESS...

The latest news is that negotiations with the Met. Office, which having been going on for some time, have now resulted in a formal agreement, under which historic weather records going back to 1854 will be housed alongside the new Record Office.

...AND GREAT MOOR FARM

Dr Todd Gray has pointed out a sale catalogue for Great Moor Farm dated 1944 among the records of Husseys, the auctioneers (62/9/2 box 8/3). This states that 'the Farm House is of a roomy, comfortable character. It is built of cob, slate and corrugated iron, and contains:-PORCH, HALL, LOUNGE, 18ft. by 18ft.; DINING ROOM, 13ft. by 13ft.; KITCHEN and SCULLERY, DAIRY, PUMP HOUSE, COALHOUSE, etc. W.C. downstairs'. The farm buildings consisted of 'Cellar, Four-stall Stable with loft over, cow Shippons, one to tie fourteen and the other to tie six; Calves' Houses, Barn, Two Bullock Sheds, Piggeries, Dutch Barn and open Cattle Shed. In the Orchard is a Cart Shed'. The farm contained just over 104 acres, and the land consisted of 'rich, level, Arable, Grass and Orcharding, as well as two Plantations known as Upper Moor and Middle Moor'. Things have changed quite a bit since then, but you can still see fields and trees from the windows.

NEWS FROM THE SERVICE POINTS

Following the success of the service point at Holsworthy Museum, which has been reinforced with copy microfiche for a number of additional parishes this year, the network of 'second-tier' service points has spread further to encompass Kingsbridge and Honiton. Cookworthy Museum and All Hallows' Museum now have fiche of registers and tithe maps and apportionments for a small number of local parishes, with machines for viewing them and copies of lists of documents relating to the surrounding area. Neither point has yet been officially opened, and the Kingsbridge one forms part of a larger project, so it is advisable to check on availability of these sources before visiting.

The Annual Service Point Meeting will take place at 2.00 pm on Tuesday 10 December this year in the Music Room at Exeter Central Library and will include a presentation on the Totnes Image bank. The usual business meeting will follow; among other matters we shall be discussing the establishment of further service points in 2003.

The full regional report of the South West Social Impact Audit Project has now been published. Copies can be obtained from the South West Museums Libraries and Archives Council, Creech Castle, Bathpool, Taunton, TA1 2DX. There is also an executive summary, which is available from the same address and can be seen on the Internet at www.swmlac.org.uk

DEVON MAPS AND MAP-MAKERS

The Devon carto-bibliography of manuscript maps before 1840, edited by Mary Ravenhill and Margery Rowe, fliers for which accompanied the May newsletter, has now been published and was launched in Exeter Central Library on 21 November. The two volumes come in a handsome slip-case and contain as complete as listing as is currently possible of maps held at the Devon and North Devon Record Offices and elsewhere. Copies can be obtained from the Devon and Cornwall Record Society at 7 The Close, Exeter, EX1 1EZ, or from the Devon Record Office, price £40.00.

MILLENNIUM DOMESDAY

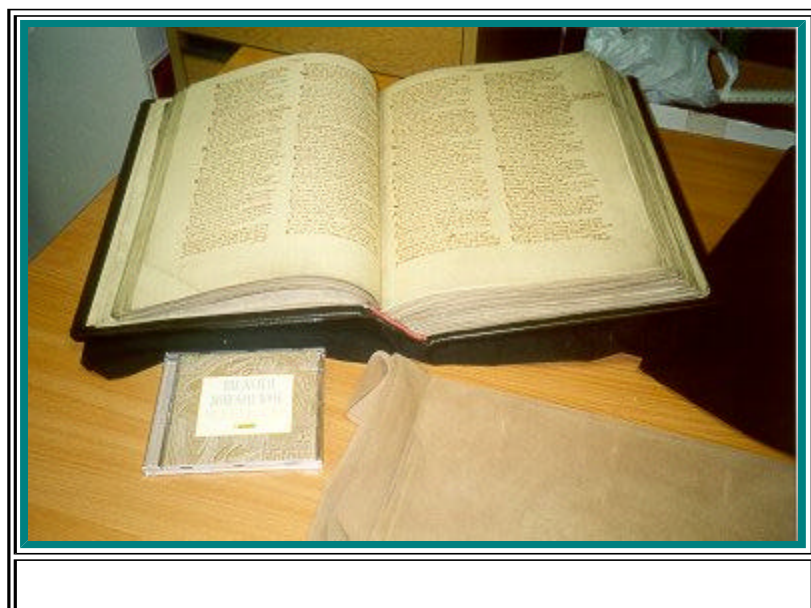
The Devon Record Office's collections have recently been enriched by the addition of a most unusual item. It is not strictly a primary source, for it is a modern facsimile of an ancient original; nor is it unique, for it is one of a limited edition of 450 copies. It does however represent a breakthrough in access to, and interpretation of, one of the most famous and significant documents in Britain.

Domesday Book, along perhaps with Magna Carta, has assumed an almost ritual significance for students of English history, and this can sometimes obscure both its real nature and purpose and the extraordinary achievement which its compilation

represents. Created by the Norman government only twenty years after the Conquest of 1066, it is a comprehensive survey of the kingdom on a scale not attempted again until the first population census in 1801. The volumes themselves, fair copies of local drafts like the Exon Domesday (which can be seen in Exeter Cathedral Library), have a kind of severe beauty, with their finely tooled binding, their evenly cut parchment folios, their neat columns, their distinctive script, and conventions like the red lines scored through the place names to make them stand out. The original Great and Little Domesday are currently on display at the Public Record Office, in a glass case under subdued light, rather like sacred relics.

Facsimiles and transcriptions of Domesday have been around for a long time, but the book is not easy to use, partly because of the unfamiliar terms which occur in the text (villan, bordar, virgate, ploughland, hide, etc), and partly because it is so difficult now to imagine what the country looked like, and how people lived, in the early Middle Ages. After many years' work, Alecto Historical Editions have produced a package which includes an exceptionally fine facsimile of Great Domesday, volumes of transcription, translation, glossary, and essays, a set of maps, and four interactive CD-ROMs which combine these various elements in a form which makes it possible to move from one to the other at the click of a mouse.

Around Easter this year a letter landed on the County Archivist's desk from Mr Roger Reed of Milber Estates offering to donate one of these sets to the Devon Record Office. Mr Reed's generous offer was quickly accepted, and after several months of correspondence, telephone calls, and meetings, the volumes and disks were handed over to the Chairman of the County Council, Cllr Mary Strudwick, at a reception in the ICT suite at Exeter Central Library on 27 November. After Cllr Strudwick had thanked Mr Reed warmly for his kind gift, Henrietta Pearson and Nigel Frith of Alecto demonstrated the capabilities of the digital version, after which the assembled guests were let loose on the computers in the suite to try it out for themselves, quickly becoming absorbed in the wealth of information.



The Millennium Domesday and CD-Rom.



Mr Roger Reed (second from left) and Councillor Mary Strudwick (third from left) at the ceremony in Exeter Central Library.

The facsimile volumes are now in the Record Office at Exeter, where they can be seen in the searchroom, while the digital version is available on all the public-access computers in the Central Library. It is hoped in time to make this available to schools over the county network, where the combination of 11th-century history and 21st-century technology should prove an irresistible incentive to explore it.

Domesday is the first point of reference for most parish and town histories, and finding references to individual people and places in it is now much easier. Our sincere thanks go to Mr Reed for his generous contribution to the study of local history in Devon.

STAFF CHANGES AT BARNSTAPLE



Gary Knaggs has recently joined the staff of the North Devon Record Office. Gary, an archivist, joins the team at Barnstaple after spending the last three years working at the Norfolk Record Office in Norwich. Originally from the Leeds area, he studied history and philosophy as a mature student at the University of Leeds before doing a postgraduate diploma in archive administration at the University of Wales, Bangor. Gary enjoys playing the guitar and writing songs as well as listening to a varied selection of music. He is also an ardent Leeds supporter who enjoys a pint or two of "real ale".

[Return to top of page](#)

Any
Comments?

This newsletter is edited by John Draisey, County Archivist, Devon Record Office, Castle Street, Exeter, Devon, EX4 3PU, U.K. If you have any comments or suggestions on this newsletter send to devrec@devon.gov.uk

[Click here for
Devon County
Council homepage](#)

This page was last updated 23/12/02
Copyright Devon County Council,
2001
Send comments, enquiries, etc., to
devrec@devon.gov.uk

[Click here for
information on
Devon Tourism](#)