

## STATISTICS

The figures for last year show some slightly surprising trends. There was a big increase (nearly 14%) in individual visits at Exeter, accompanied by a very small decrease in Barnstaple. However, document orders were down in Exeter but up in Barnstaple, while fiche issues moved in the opposite directions. Distance enquiries continue to increase in both offices, and over two thirds of communications last year were received by e-mail. The large number of visits and talks at Exeter reflects the efforts of the Heritage Outreach Officer since September, as well as continued interest in the new office. Numbers of deposits

Statistics 2006/7 (2005/6 in brackets)			
	Exeter	Barnstaple	Total
Individual visits	10,058 (8,859)	2,605 (2,671)	12,663 (11,530)
Group visits	34 (28)	10 (12)	44 (40)
Microform issues	98,184 (89,888)	16,139 (16,238)	114,323 (106,126)
Document orders	10,868 (11,517)	1,653 (1,572)	12,521 (13,089)
Postal enquiries	7,867 (6,751)	979 (723)	8,846 (7,474)
Exhibitions	6 (4)	7 (6)	13 (10)
Talks	19 (6)	4 (6)	23 (12)
Deposits	172 (240)	90 (96)	262 (336)

(though not necessarily their size) were down considerably, perhaps not so surprising after the huge influx in the previous year.

As with all statistics, it is the story behind the figures that really matters. Figures vary from week to week and from month to month without any obvious pattern, but

the popularity of both branches of the office, and of historical research in general, is still apparent. If we are communicating the message that historical records should be preserved so that they can be used for research, then we are succeeding in our purpose.

## DEVON LOCAL HISTORY DAY

On Saturday 14th April the Devon Record Office hosted a Local History Day, subtitled 'Navigating the Sources'. The idea was to help members of the public interested in local landscape history navigate



their way through the three main offices in Devon holding landscape information: The Devon Record Office (Sowton); the Historic Environment Record (County Hall) and the Westcountry Studies Library (Exeter). In the course of the morning, sessions introduced by Simon Timms (Head of Culture,

Devon County Council), Peter Waite, John Brunton and Bill Horner presented the work of their respective institutions.

After a short break for lunch the 70 participants moved to the public searchroom where displays linked the three offices across a common research theme, that of

19<sup>th</sup> century mining. In addition, further sources for the landscape historian were presented through several additional exhibitions: oral history (the Branscombe Project); vernacular building (the buildings group of the Devonshire Association); material culture (the Portable Antiquities Scheme, administered by the Royal Albert Memorial Museum).

The day ended with a presentation by Philippe Panel, Outreach Officer at the DRO,

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featuring an example of recent landscape work in East Devon which involved the navigation of some of the sources presented during the day.

Many of the participants were surprised at the quantity and

quality of the information held by the three main offices represented, and it is hoped that a similar day will be organised later this year as this course was considerably oversubscribed. In the meantime all those interested in landscape history should follow

Simon Timms' injunction to be prepared to get muddy feet, to which the only rider might perhaps be: try not to bring the mud into the DRO, HER or WSL in your eagerness to 'Navigate the Sources'.

Philippe Planel

## EIGHTEENTH CENTURY DEVON: PEOPLE AND COMMUNITIES

The Friends of Devon's Archives "Eighteenth Century Devon: People and Communities" project is drawing to a close and will finish at the end of June. Since the last newsletter further documents have been transcribed and are being prepared for publication on the Friends' website (<http://www.foda.org.uk>).

Having completed the transcription of the replies to Bishop Clagett's 1744 visitation queries it became clear that these contained a number of gaps in the parishes covered. Consultation of the typed index to visitation returns in the DRO search room revealed that almost complete geographical coverage could be achieved by transcribing the 1779 replies to queries issued by Bishop Ross.

The 1779 replies add to the picture of the Church of England in Devon during the eighteenth century. They also tell us about the character of some of the clergy who served parishes in the county. The Reverend Corpe of Seaton and Beer was unimpressed with the living he had held for the previous decade. He wrote that he had not resided in his vicarage house for three years as "Self Preservation drove Me and my Family from the

lugentes Campi [mourning fields] or inhospitable Vale of Seaton". Perhaps in an effort to secure a more favourable benefice he concluded his replies with a passage of Latin praising Bishop Ross that ended, "With you as my leader, with you as my protector, I shall never lose hope".

The final set of transcripts that have been prepared are nine volumes of Freeholders' Books: one for each decade beginning with 1711. These were compiled annually and contain the names of all those eligible to serve on juries at Quarter Sessions and Assize trials. In the early eighteenth century only men aged 21-70 with freehold or copyhold properties worth £10 per year or more were eligible (fewer than 1,500 individuals for most years). In 1730 this was extended to include tenants of properties worth a minimum of £20 per year held on long leases. These later books contain as many as 3,700 names, and also give details of status and land tenure.

The last few months of the project are being spent starting a new project that will continue after July. During the 2006 Friends' conference and AGM on "Devon Diaries" it was widely felt that researchers would benefit from

the creation of a comprehensive listing of surviving diaries relating to the history of Devon. Therefore, information is being gathered on material held at repositories in Devon and elsewhere. Volunteers are being sought to prepare brief descriptions and subject indexes of the diaries, in order to produce an annotated list for publication on the Friends' website.

Volunteer contributions have been an important part of the eighteenth century project. Five articles have been received to date, each representing the fruits of research into the history of a Devon community. Work has been undertaken on North Tawton, Rackenford, Drewsteignton, Morchard Bishop, Bow, Sampford Peverell and a number of other parishes. The results of these volunteer projects will be published on the Friends' website in June.

The research officer, Simon Dixon, would like to thank the project coordinator Ian Mortimer, all members of DRO staff, the Friends of Devon's Archives committee and members and all volunteer contributors for their help and enthusiasm during the last two years.

Simon Dixon

## EXPLORE NORTH DEVON



The Devon Record Office has been awarded a Heritage Lottery Fund Your Heritage grant to enable us to contribute to the national Archives 4 All initiative, the current phase of the successful Access to Archives programme spearheaded by The National Archives. We are working with partners from the North Devon and Torridge District Councils museum service, the Northern Devon Coast & Countryside Service and The National Archives on a project called Explore North Devon, which is developing five community archive collections in the northern Devon area. The project will allow the participating communities in Bratton Fleming, Hartland, Mortehoe, Parracombe and Winkleigh to collect and research information about their local heritage that they feel is important and present it to a global audience through the Internet. Additional funding has been contributed by the North Devon Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty

to carry out landscape interpretation work in the parishes lying within its area. The participating communities already have extensive collections of photographs, documents, objects and oral history recordings and these will be incorporated into the Explore North Devon resource alongside newly created digital content. Community events, volunteering, training opportunities, heritage trails and classroom resources are some of the benefits that will be generated by the project and the end results will be accessible on the project website at [www.explorenorthdevon.org.uk](http://www.explorenorthdevon.org.uk), with links and tasters on the Access to Archives website at [www.a2a.org.uk](http://www.a2a.org.uk). Work on this exciting collaborative project started in October 2006 and it is funded until March 2008. If you would like further information about Explore North Devon, please contact Tim Wormleighton at the North Devon Record Office.

## BUDLEIGH SALTERTON SERVICE POINT

On 23 April 2007, a celebration was held at the Fairlynch Museum in Budleigh Salterton to mark the opening there of the 12<sup>th</sup> archive Service Point in the county. The Museum now holds microfiche copies of original parish registers and tithe maps and apportionments for Budleigh and the surrounding area. The red ribbon on the microfiche reader was duly cut by Dr Todd Gray, local historian and chairman of the Friends of Devon's Archives.

In his short speech Dr Gray emphasised how distinctive Devon is in its contrasting



localities, each with its own history. Furthermore, Dr Gray argued, it is only through documents that many of these local histories and human stories can be told.

Devon County Council was represented at the opening by

Simon Timms (Head of Culture), John Draisey (County Archivist), Susan Laithwaite (Senior Archivist) and Philippe Planel (Devon Record Office Outreach Officer). The Mayor of Budleigh Salterton, Courtney Richards, attended, and local history and family history societies were well represented, as of course were volunteers at the Fairlynch Museum who will be running the Service Point on a day to day basis.

Philippe Planel

# ACQUISITIONS OF SPECIAL INTEREST

## Exeter

Between 1<sup>st</sup> July 2006 and 31<sup>st</sup> March 2007, the Exeter office received an excellent range of accessions.

Parish records were deposited by Beer (6880), Broadhempston (6906), Drewsteignton (6955), East Budleigh (6895), Cornworthy (6913), Feniton (6866, 6942), Halberton (6869), Ide (6920), Ideford (6846), Ipplepen (6975), Peter Tavy (6896) and Torbryan (6976).

Collections of church records were also received from Exeter Methodist Circuit (6884, 6885, 6974), Newton Abbot Baptist Church (6916), Paignton United Reformed Church (6845), Tavistock Methodist Circuit (6973) and Tiverton Methodist Circuit (6886).

Parish council records came in from Aylesbeare (6908), Broadclyst (6935), Broadwoodwidge (6890), Halberton (6870), Ipplepen (6930) and Yarcombe (6858).

Other official deposits were received from Devon County Council (6897, 6910), the Devon Primary Care Trust (6921), the Exeter and Greater Devon Coroner (6964), the Torbay and South Devon Coroner (6899), the Exeter Diocesan Board of Patronage (6907), the Exeter Diocesan Council for Social Aid (6879) and HM Inspectorate of Mines (6933). We were also given some Honiton Poor Law Union Guardians' minutes (6843) covering the period between 1894

and 1896, which were rescued from a skip outside Honiton Hospital during the 1980s.

School records were received which relate to Higher Brixham Primary School (6927), St. Peter's High School, Exeter (6924), St. Sidwell's Primary School, Exeter (6957), St. Thomas Board Boys' School (later John Stocker School), Exeter (6848), St. Thomas Board Girls' School, Exeter (6847), Torquay Girls' Grammar School (6932), Priory Roman Catholic Primary School, Torquay (6928), St. Cuthbert Mayne Secondary School, Torquay (6929) and Warberry Church of England Primary School, Torquay (6931).

Records relating to a range of families have been received, including material which relates to the Collins family of Chagford (6958), the Gillards of Brixham (6841), the Hainworth and Parker families of Ashburton and Crediton (6934), the Page and Morrish families of Morchard Bishop (6891), and, perhaps most significantly, the Coleridge family of Ottery St. Mary (6918).

Business records relating to the Newton Abbot publishing firm, David and Charles (6889), the Exeter-based Chartered Surveyors Drew Pearce (6953), the Exeter ecclesiastical carvers and sculptors Herbert Read Ltd (6854), the Exeter ironmongers F. Parkin and Son Ltd (6919) and the Great Western Railway (6962) have also been received.

There have also been several good accessions relating to medical provision within the county, including records of the old Digby Hospital, Exeter (6857), the Devon and Exeter Dental Hospital (6905) and Black Torrington Medical Practice (6956).

From the political world, we have acquired records relating to the Exeter Division Liberal Association (6914), the Exmouth and Hundred of East Budleigh Conservative Association (a minute book covering the association's entire history, from 1835 to 1842) and Teignbridge Constituency Conservative Association (6887).

Turning to sport and recreation in the county, we have received a further deposit of records from the Devon District Association of the Cyclists' Touring Club (6874).

There have been a number of other significant accessions which do not fit neatly into any of the above categories, including a large collection of records relating to the Devon Militia (6855), which includes a lot of eighteenth and early nineteenth century material relating to Officers, and an album containing some very good late nineteenth century photographs of buildings and landscapes, predominantly in west Devon (6856). There has also been a deposit by the 'Antient Fraternity of Free and Accepted Masons of the Province of Devonshire' (6911), and the eighteenth century map of

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Crediton which was mentioned in the last issue of this newsletter (6850).

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.

## Barnstaple

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: Appledore (3251), Barnstaple: Holy Trinity (3053), Bishops Nympton (596), High Bickington (2849), Instow (3064) and Northam (including Westward Ho!) (1843).

Additional nonconformist records have been received from the Barnstaple (2347) and Ilfracombe (2334) Methodist circuits, and from the joint Methodist/URC congregation of Christ Church, Barnstaple (B430).

Official records have been transferred from the parish councils of Bratton Fleming (1507), Braunton (B536), Clovelly, including minutes from 1906 on (B384), Challacombe (B865) and Shirwell (B841), the last two including minutes dating from the establishment of the parish councils in 1894. Torrington Highway Board (later Torrington Rural District Council Highway Committee) minutes from 1864 to 1930 have also been received (2460). Torridge District Council has deposited further collections of pre-registration title deeds and



associated documents relating to properties in various parishes within its area, 1740-1989 (B844 & B860). School records have been received from Ashleigh Road, Barnstaple (3674), Chawleigh (B863) and Marwood (B866) Primary Schools.

Other deposits of note include additional records of the North Devon Journal newspaper company (B643), minutes of the Appledore branch of the RNLI,

1914-2001 (B864), sales ledgers, 1938-1960, of A.H. Cox & Co., pharmaceutical manufacturers of Barnstaple (B850), an extensive collection of papers relating to the Fulford family of Bideford, 20<sup>th</sup> cent. (B840), title deeds and associated papers relating to Crang family properties in Bideford and Bishop's Nympton, 1699-1900 (B795), deeds for various properties in Ashreigney, 1552-1879 (B845) and an attractive map of the manor of Knowstone by John Easton of Taunton, 1820 (B843). Our increasingly comprehensive holdings of material relating to Lundy have been enhanced with the deposit of further photographs of the island by R.D. Sach, a photograph album (some pictures from which are seen here) and ship's log of HMS Montagu, the navy vessel that was famously wrecked off the island in 1906 (B627), a collection of reports and papers compiled by amateur archaeologist, Keith Gardner, who worked on Lundy regularly during the 1950s and 60s (B867), and a set of fine, large scale contour maps and associated aerial photographs produced by the British Cadastral & Topographical Air Survey Company in 1928 (B852). The North Devon Record Office will be including some of these records in an exhibition on the history of Lundy this summer.

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.

## SIX MONTHS AT THE DRO



*Washing a paper document with  
Deborah Phillips, Senior Conservator*



*Working on the Late Bishop's Transcripts*

I started my six months at the Devon Record Office in October 2006, thinking that six months would last an age but it has flown by!

I saw the advert in the Institute of Conservation's magazine and wanted to apply as I had some experience of conservation from working in the Nottinghamshire Archives and from doing church restoration but had found that conservation is a hard area to get employment in without relevant experience or qualifications. This internship was offered to those without qualifications in conservation and was aimed at giving the intern a good overview into the world of archive conservation.

The internship began with a chat with Deborah Phillips, the Senior Conservator, about what I hoped to gain from the time at the record office. I had some experience of basic cleaning and care of paper documents from my previous job in Nottingham and I felt that it would be useful to touch on the different kinds of repair for paper documents and possibly venture into parchment and seal repair.

Deborah and John Draisey had found two collections of documents that they felt would provide a suitable range of problems to work on, the Late Bishop's Transcripts and the Seale of Dartmouth collection. The Bishop's Transcripts had been badly damaged during the Exeter Blitz and I was able to use several new pieces of equipment as well as current techniques to help them relax and lie flat so they could be read.

Seale of Dartmouth is a collection of family papers that enabled me to start from basics with paper repair; I had researched the various paper repair techniques before coming to Exeter but had not been able to practise them until I started on the Seale collection. By December we came to the decision that the collections had produced all that they could and it was time to move onto other documents in the archive. I was able to work on several seals ranging from Edward VI's reign to George III's and assist with the tithe map survey and, in my last week here, I have managed to clean and repair one of the more damaged

tithe maps.

One of the many advantages that my time at the Devon Record Office has given me is the help and advice I received from other staff. In the Conservation Unit I worked with Rebecca Gee, a trainee on the Society of Archivists Conservation Certificate scheme, and Ian Ponsford, the Conservation Technician. Both have different levels of experience and were able to assist me with new and different approaches when I reached a problem. The archive staff are extremely helpful and welcoming, including taking me through their daily work whilst I sat with them in the searchroom and the document reception area.

The six months has flown by and I have gained valuable experience from being able to work on a range of fantastic documents, using the latest equipment with the recognised techniques and invaluable support from all quarters. Hopefully I shall be able to go on to the next job and use all that I have learnt from the Devon Record Office.

Claire Armstrong

## 2006 VISITOR SURVEY

Regular users may remember our last visitor survey, which was carried out in the weeks following our closure period in February 2006.

The survey, which was organised and administered by the Institute of Public Finance on behalf of the Public Services Quality Group of the National Council on Archives, required users of most of the record offices in England and Wales to complete a questionnaire about their experiences as visitors to those offices.

Inevitably, the process of 'number crunching' and then analysing the results took a long time, and we have only received the final results of the survey in the past few months.

A total of 273 questionnaires were completed at the Devon Record Office, and 56.9% of respondents regarded our visitor facilities as 'very good' with a further 37.8% rating them 'good' and only 5.3% regarding them as merely adequate. The amount of people regarding the facilities as 'very good' was significantly higher than at any other office in the south-west\* and well above the regional average score of just under 38%, which gives a very good indication of public satisfaction with the facilities at Great Moor House, which have now been in use for just over two years.

On 'Document Delivery' we didn't fare quite so well, with just under 52% of survey respondents rating our service as 'very good'. This

was still just above the regional average of 49%, although a number of other offices in the region achieved higher scores.

It was also pleasing to have the second highest percentage of people in the region rating our microfilm and microfiche viewing facilities as 'very good', while we had the highest such rating for our public Information Technology facilities. Also within the IT sphere, we received a 'very good' rating for our website which was above the regional average (31.5% against 27%).

There seemed to be a general consensus of opinion regarding the opening hours of archives in the south-west, with virtually all the region's offices recording 'very good' ratings of between 30 and 40%, although we, at 36.4%, were around 5% above the regional average.

The highest percentage of respondents of any office in the south-west regarded 'physical access to and in the building' as being 'very good' (59.7%), something which unquestionably reflects the fact that we currently occupy the newest building in the region, and one which was able to be specifically designed with the 1995 Disability Discrimination Act (which came into force in October 2004) in mind.

With regard to the overall service, if one discounts the smaller offices in the region, we had the third highest percentage of respondents regarding us as 'very good' (54.1%) behind the Wiltshire and Swindon Record

Office (63.3%) and the Dorset History Centre (57.2%).

Of course, while the majority of the ratings which we received in the survey were very good, it would be wrong for us to feel that there are no improvements which can be made to our service. The questionnaire asked users to state which areas of our service they felt were most in need of improvement, and while no aspects of the service particularly stand out from the analysis of this section – indeed, 43.8% of respondents felt that no change was necessary – two areas of concern appear to be our opening hours and the 'helpfulness and friendliness of staff'. Obviously the findings regarding opening hours (18.9% of respondents felt that they needed to be improved) seems to contradict the general level of satisfaction with them which I referred to earlier, but I think that this simply reflects the fact that, however long an office is open, a significant minority of people will always feel that it should be open for longer. Given our current level of staffing, it is unlikely that there will be any extensions to our opening hours in the foreseeable future, but there is always the possibility that adjustments to them may be made. With regard to the impression that the staff make on visitors, we shall all have to try just a little harder!

The survey contains a lot of similar information in relation to the services provided by most - if not all - of the public sector

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archive repositories in England and Wales. There is also a wealth of additional statistics about such aspects of people's visits as how far, and by what means, they travelled to the office, whether their visit to the office was the main purpose of their visit to the area, what types of research they were pursuing and some responses to some more philosophical questions about the value of archives to society. Searchers' ages, genders and ethnic origins are also recorded.

If anyone would like to consult the full results of the survey themselves, it can be found on the Institute of Public Finance's website at [www.ipf.com](http://www.ipf.com).

Brian Carpenter

\* The offices in the south-west which took part in the survey were as follows:

- Bath Record Office
- Bristol Record Office
- Cornwall Record Office
- Devon Record Office
- Dorset History Centre
- Gloucestershire Record Office
- National Monuments Record Centre, Swindon
- North Devon Record Office
- Plymouth and West Devon Record Office
- Somerset Record Office
- Wiltshire and Swindon Record Office

## FRIENDS OF DEVON'S ARCHIVES

On 4th October 2006 David Hawkings gave a talk to members about "Criminal Records" with a special emphasis on those held in Devon, and our AGM and Conference - with the theme "Devon Diaries" - was held at County Hall in Exeter on 21st October. Six speakers described diaries which they either have in their possession or have researched, on themes as varied as a Devon thatcher's life (Doug Skinner), Baring Gould's diary (Ronald Wawman), the musings of the young daughter of a Major General in 1885 (Tricia Whiteaway), the diary of an eighteenth century Exeter merchant (Sadru Bhanji), the diary of John Bound of Sheepwash (Simon Dixon) and the diary of a Town Missionary in Plymouth (Jill Drysdale).

In November four workshops were held at the Devon and Exeter Institution, the theme being "Devon Buildings", and a one day conference held at MARJON in Plymouth on 11th November was thoroughly enjoyed by a large audience.

On March 24th and 25th two Local History Days were held in Dartmouth, at which the Dartmouth Local History Society celebrated the successful completion of their local history project with presentations throughout the day.

April 18th saw Simon Dixon give a presentation on the project that he has been involved in for the last two years. This project, transcribing the Devon Oath Rolls and placing a

searchable index on the FoDA website, was instigated by FoDA committee member Ian Mortimer, who was successful in obtaining a Heritage Lottery Fund grant to employ Simon for two years. Unfortunately we must now say goodbye to Simon and we all wish him well for the future.

On June 25th there is to be a Film Archive Night held in Silverton Village Hall (7 p.m. for 7.30). This is a joint event with Silverton Local History Society. For tickets, please telephone 01803 863816.

The 2007 AGM and Conference will be held on October 20th at County Hall, Exeter, from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. This year's theme is "Watching Over You" and will delve into archives which are not available to the general public. Speakers will include Dr. Todd Gray and Angela Sutton Vane.

There will again be a one day event in Plymouth this year; it will take place at MARJON on November 17th from 10 until 4 and is entitled 'Curious Plymouth'. Speakers will include Sam Johnston (Plymouth City Archivist) and Dr Todd Gray. Elayne Hoskin (Curator, South-West Film and Television Archive) will be there to present some more archive film of Plymouth.

There will be four workshops in November and application forms for these and the two events above will be sent to members in September.

Jill Drysdale