

Devon Libraries

Local Studies service

Factsheet 7

What does the local studies service offer?

Information on all aspects of Devon and its region, past and present, which the public library service has been collecting since the 1870s. The service is freely available to everyone, and you do not have to be a registered borrower to use the collections. These unique resources are used by university researchers, schoolchildren undertaking project work, local history groups, and many others.

Items in the main local studies collections are for reference use in the library only, but there are copies of many titles available for loan through the county's lending libraries.

- **Your family** – registers and records can help genealogical research. We subscribe to Ancestry Library Edition which you can use free of charge for thirty minutes at all libraries and longer for a small charge
- **Your house** – maps and other resources give information on the history of buildings
- **Your town or village** – a wide range of material shows how your community has changed over the centuries
- **Your work** – directories and guide books are among the sources that can document your trade or industry in the past
- **Your county or region** – reports and statistics can shed light on the problems and opportunities that face it today
- **Your future** – a range of planning documents is available for consultation

What can I find in the collections?

- **Books** – county and town histories, guidebooks, trade directories, reports and official documents on many subjects, published from the 16th century to the present day
- **Periodicals** – publications of local history and learned societies, as well as county magazines and newsletters
- **Newspapers** – regional coverage for every year since 1737, normally held on microfilm
- **Maps** – from the 16th century to date, including Ordnance Survey Plans and complete coverage of Devon in computerised form
- **Illustrations** – photographs, engravings and drawings provide a vivid image of the changing scene since the 18th century
- **Microforms** – including the census returns 1841 – 1901 and the International Genealogical index of baptisms and marriages

- **Cutting and information files** – on a wide range of topics, both historical and of current interest
- **Indexes** - extensive place, subject and name listings to help you find what you require. Many of these are available on the website at www.devon.gov.uk/localstudies

What services do you provide?

- **Enquiries** – staff will help you find the information you need, but resources do not allow us to undertake detailed research on your behalf
- **Contacts** - no single resource can hope to be comprehensive. If your enquiry cannot be answered from the library's resources, staff can refer you to record offices, museums or other experts
- **Equipment** – microfilm and microfiche readers and photocopiers are available in larger libraries. There is a charge for photocopies and printouts
- **Talks** – talks on the collections can be given to visiting groups by arrangement
- **Displays** – displays on local topics are prepared, some of which travel around the county

How can I help the service?

- By treating the often fragile documents with care so that they can survive for the benefit of people in the future
- By contacting us in advance of your visit if you want to use equipment such as microfilm readers, or if you wish to consult material which is kept in store
- By discussing group visits with us well in advance so that, if necessary, workspace can be reserved and material can be gathered together ready for you
- By letting us have details of local items of interest that we may have missed

How can I find more information?

- **Internet** – find out more about the service and search the local studies catalogue, including many local images, at www.devon.gov.uk/localstudies
- **Subscription services** – free for library members and some can be accessed from your home computer! They include 19th Century British Newspapers, Times Digital Archive, Ancestry Library Edition (library access only) and Oxford National Dictionary of Biography.

Website

Our **website** is www.devon.gov.uk/libraries and the **local studies homepage** is www.devon.gov.uk/localstudies

Main local studies collections

EXETER

Address: Westcountry Studies Library
Castle Street
Exeter
EX4 3PQ

Phone: 01392 384216

Email: westcountry.library@devon.gov.uk

BARNSTAPLE

Address: North Devon Local Studies Centre
Tuly Street
Barnstaple
EX31 1EL

Phone: 01271 388607

Email: barnlocstudy.library@devon.gov.uk

The North Devon Local Studies Centre also houses the North Devon Record Office, email ndevrec@devon.gov.uk

More detailed guides to these libraries are available.

Other libraries

Larger libraries such as Exmouth, Bideford, Tiverton and Newton Abbot have large collections of local material and most other branches also have collections relating to their immediate area. Newton Abbot Library also houses a specialist Railway Studies collection.

Devon Record Office

Address: Great Moor House
Bittern Road
Sowton
Exeter
EX2 7NL

Phone: 01392 384253

Email: devrec@devon.gov.uk

The Devon Record Office also has a service point in the Westcountry Studies Library offering access to fiche of Parish Registers and Inland Revenue Wills only, and it has a number of service points elsewhere in Devon.

Different formats

If you would like a summary of this in a different format such as large print, Braille or tape, or in a different language, please contact our Customer Service Centre on 0845 155 1015 or email customer@devon.gov.uk

Last updated October 2009