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Tawstock House, drawn by G.B. Campion, engraved by James Bingley, 1831  
(by courtesy of the Westcountry Studies Library)  
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## STAFF CHANGES AT EXETER AND PLYMOUTH

After 19 years as County Archivist, Margery Rowe retired at the end of June. The remaining staff have 'closed ranks' to fill the gap, so that John Draisey is now County Archivist and John Brunton is Senior Archivist. Jan Wood, who was previously a searcher and a volunteer, started work in July as a part-time replacement for Gary Tuson, who left in March. So far we have managed not to reduce the level of service at Exeter, but the office is getting busier all the time, and we are all under more pressure than before.

Jan Hargreaves will be leaving us this month for a job in Sheffield, and so there will be further changes in Plymouth. There are usually only three staff at the WDRO now, and in addition the increasing number of visitors there means that overcrowding in the searchroom is becoming a problem. It is not easy to see how this can be solved in the present building; please be patient, therefore, if we have difficulty finding space for you.

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## **CONSERVATION - Ancient Letters of the City of Exeter**

These seven volumes containing over 700 letters, in the outdated 'Guard and File' style, belong to Exeter City Archives and contain letters from the Sovereigns of England, Privy Council, burgesses and others. Some describe weighty matters of state, others the witness accounts of gory occurrences in well known areas of the city.

*...that John Bedecome forthe toke his rapier and went yn to the feldes thereby named Bonnehay, and likewise M. Abbot toke a staff of 7 foote longe and folowed after yn to the same felde, where they bothe mett together, and the said John havinge his rapier yn his hand drewe the same and ranne upon the said Abbot and thrust him yn to the body under the right breste, and then and there felonously gave him a deadlye wonde of vj. enches deepe and one enche broade, of which wonde the sayde M.A. immediately immediately dyed...*

New Conservation methods for single-sheet documents have been developed in recent years. Once these volumes were identified as needing updated storage, the Conservation Unit had the techniques and materials in place. The Conservator will examine the whole volume and begin a detailed report on the proposed work. Photographs and notes are taken and, if necessary, research from specialist sources.

The Conservation process has removed the acids and lightened the stains. For archive purposes it is unnecessary to erase them. After the paper repair is complete, the letter is mounted into a 'Fascicule' or blank booklet with a paper hinge.

Several of these filled booklets fit into a storage box which sits on the shelf like a volume. This has the advantage that only ten letters at a time need be produced to a researcher, as opposed to a volume of one hundred letters.

The result of this work has given the letters individual identity, ease of access and the best chance of surviving many more centuries.

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## **NORTH DEVON RECORD OFFICE**

### **GENERAL REGISTER OFFICE INDEX NOW AVAILABLE IN BARNSTAPLE**

The North Devon Athenaeum, one of the departments contributing to the North Devon Local Studies Centre in Barnstaple Library, has recently acquired the General Register Office (or St Catherine's House) Index to the records of births, marriages and deaths in England and Wales, which began on 1 July 1837. The Index is arranged by surname, although there are separate sections for every 3 month period, or quarter. Therefore, unless one has an approximate date for an event, a considerable amount of searching may be required. Information provided by the Index includes, as a minimum, the registration district and a reference number which will enable a copy certificate to be purchased from the General Register Office or the appropriate Superintendent Registrar. Please note that the Local Studies Centre cannot provide copy certificates, although it can give addresses of local Registry Offices. The Index is complete to

1983 (birth records to 1975 only). Prior booking is strongly advised, and microfiche readers can be reserved for a maximum of two hours in any one day (please telephone (01271) 388607).

### **RADIO DEVON FAMILY HISTORY PHONE-IN**

To celebrate the arrival of the General Register Office Index in Barnstaple Library, Marjorie Snetzler of the North Devon Athenaeum and Tim Wormleighton, Senior Archivist at the North Devon Record Office, took part in a discussion and phone-in on the subject of family history research, broadcast live on Radio Devon on the 30th September. As well as taking the opportunity to explain the range of sources available in the North Devon Local Studies Centre, the pair were able to respond to a number of callers, each of whom had an interesting family history tale to relate.

### **NEW DISPLAY AT NORTH DEVON LOCAL STUDIES CENTRE: A TIME LINE OF LOCAL HISTORY SOURCES**

The North Devon Local Studies Centre has gone 'back to basics' in its latest exhibition, currently on view on the second floor in Barnstaple Library. In contrast to the usual approach, which tends to concentrate on a particular parish or topic, the new display offers a panoramic sweep through English history from the Norman Conquest to the time of the French Revolution. Significant national and local events are shown alongside examples of contemporaneous documents and published works, and it is hoped that this approach will enable the viewer to visualise more easily the link between the sequence of history and the development of the various classes of records which resulted from historical events. Most of the sources depicted are available for consultation in libraries and record offices in Devon, in the form of either transcripts or original documents. The display will be on view during Barnstaple Library opening hours until further notice.

### **LAUNCH OF DEVON HOUSEHOLD ACCOUNTS, PART II, HENRY, EARL OF BATH, AND RACHEL, COUNTESS OF BATH, OF TAWSTOCK AND LONDON, 1639-1654**

The launch of the second part of the Devon and Cornwall Record Society's publication for 1996 will be held in the Henry Williamson Room, Barnstaple Library, on Saturday 7th December 1996, when its editor, Dr Todd Gray, will give a short talk about the publication and the significance of the family documents which form its subject matter. There will also be a display of documents relating to Tawstock on the landing outside the Henry Williamson Room. Please contact the North Devon Record Office on (01271) 388608 for further details.

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## **ACQUISITIONS OF SPECIAL INTEREST**

### **EXETER:**

The number of records deposited has continued high, though it has fallen a little since May. Attempts to complete the second round of Parochial Registers and Records Measure inspections have ensured that Anglican parishes are well represented among depositors, and 57 deposits out of 133 have come from this source. Not many non-

conformist churches have transferred material, but records going back to 1876 were received from Belgrave Congregational church, Torquay (D 5471).

Many of the largest deposits have come from official bodies such as magistrates' courts, but some of the most interesting have been small collections and individual items. The minute books of the Devon Incorporated Law Society, 1808-1950 (D 5466), were duly deposited and officially received (see DRO Newsletter number 17), and the National Union of Teachers, Teign and Dart Branch, provided a complete set of minutes from 1874 to 1957 (D 5502). An 18th-century recipe book compiled at Worth in Washfield (D 5480) was deposited by the Tiverton War Memorial Trust, while an account book relating to the estate of Mrs Jane Champernowne, who died in 1781 and had property in Starcross and Soho Square, was received from the Westcountry Studies Library (D 5481). The WSL was also the source of the most unusual item deposited, a volume containing drawings of the armorial bearings of Devon families, compiled about 1596, which was purchased with the aid of the Kent Kingdon Trust and the Victoria and Albert Museum Purchase Grant Fund.

A copy of the Western Luminary for 27 March 1857 (D 5476) was presented on the day of Margery Rowe's retirement; the title was thought to be particularly appropriate to the occasion.

#### **NORTH DEVON:**

The North Devon Record Office is pleased to report that archive material continues to be received on a regular basis. Since the last edition of this Newsletter, deposits of documents have been received from the parishes of Nymet Rowland (271add3), Atherington (1562adds6&7), Alverdiscott (2976add3), Trentishoe (1016add4), Arlington (2005add5), Alwington (266add4), Buckland Filleigh (1096add4), Shebbear (2939add3) and Molland (B415). The latter comprises all the non-current records, previously held in the church safe, and includes registers from 1538, churchwardens' accounts from 1554 and highway surveyors' accounts from 1792.

Records of nonconformist denominations have been received from Barnstaple Baptist Church (B419), South Molton Methodist Circuit (2506add4) and the United Reformed Church congregations at Northam and Appledore, which combined in 1993 and which closed earlier this year. The deposit includes the Appledore Church baptism register from 1755.

Other significant accessions include technical drawings by the Barnstaple shipbuilder, James Goss (B422), and the records of the South Molton Municipal Charities, going back to 1859 (B429). The latter deposit is, however, closed to public access until we have received clearance from the trustees, who are deciding whether some items should be subject to closure in the interests of confidentiality. A further 55 panels of colour photographs and maps produced for planning application purposes have been transferred from the North Area Planning Department (B289add6), as well as a large number of papers and plans relating to planning applications affecting listed buildings in the North Devon area between 1984 and 1996, received from a member of various heritage advisory groups (B436). Minutes and other records of the 50th North Devon

Scout Group, 1961-1995 (B428), and the North Devon Movement, a body set up to defend the distinctive character of the region, 1960-1993 (B417), have also been received. The contentious area of modern transport policy is well represented in recent accessions, in the form of statutory deposit documents relating to the North Devon Link Road (B425) and the successful petition of the recent Save Our Railways, Barnstaple and North Devon Campaign against the closure of the Exeter to Barnstaple line (B418).

### **WEST DEVON:**

Amongst the records received at the West Devon Record Office recently was a collection of deeds and mortgages for Thornpark House, Mannamead, 1874-1922 (acc. 2149), and the L.N. Lethbridge collection, which relates to the use of Exmouth Hall, Devonport, as a First Aid Post between 1939 and 1944 (acc. 2142). Two individual items of interest are the first log book, 1895-1918, for Mount Street School, relating to the time when it was a deaf-mute establishment (acc. 2147), and a minute book of Farleys, the food manufacturers, 1919-1938, which was deposited privately but forms a useful addition to the main collection (acc. 2162).

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## **OTHER NEWS FROM THE DEVON RECORD OFFICE**

### **PAROCHIAL REGISTERS AND RECORDS MEASURE**

Considerable progress has been made towards completing the second round of inspections, but loss of staff has slowed this down. John Draisey, with Paul Brough and Tim Wormleighton, spoke at two training days for churchwardens, held at Tavistock and Alwington in November, as a means of raising awareness of what the Record Office does and what it can offer.

### **PETER ALEXANDER KENNEDY (1921-1996)**

Peter Kennedy, County Archivist of Devon from 1962 until 1977, died in Exeter at the beginning of September. Born in 1921, he read modern history at Oxford and was wounded in action in 1944 before beginning a career in archives. He became Devon's second County Archivist after working as Assistant Archivist in Northamptonshire and County Archivist of Nottinghamshire. His term of office was an eventful one. Visitor figures in Exeter rose from just over 900 to just under 4,000; the office moved premises three times; and in 1974 the city record offices in Exeter and Plymouth came under the control of the county. During this period also, many of the largest collections, both official and private, came into the office. His retirement in 1977 was part of a round of budget cuts and was accompanied by the merger of the Devon and East Devon Record Offices. After spells in Cumbria and Gloucestershire, he finally settled again in Exeter, where he busied himself with various projects, including visiting and photographing every Anglican church in Devon, and continued to travel about the county, and indeed the world, in spite of his gradually deteriorating health. His last appearance in the Record Office was at Margery Rowe's retirement party on 28 June. Always a larger-than-life character who was impossible to ignore, his death is a loss to his native county and to local history in general. He will be missed by all who knew him.

## MAP PROJECT

Margery Rowe and Mary Ravenhill are currently compiling a list of pre-1800 estate maps. The project is still at the exploratory stage at the moment, but they hope eventually to publish the results.

## DEVON DOCUMENTS

To mark Margery Rowe's retirement, Devon and Cornwall Notes and Queries, which Mrs Rowe edited from 1970 to 1994, published an additional volume, Devon Documents, a flier for which was enclosed in the last newsletter. This proved so popular that the first printing sold out almost immediately, and a second impression has already appeared. The price has been held at £9.50, and copies are available at all branches of the Devon Record Office and at a number of bookshops throughout the county.

## FORTHCOMING & RECENT EVENTS

Following his visit to North Devon Library and Record Office, the new chairman of Devon County Council, Councillor Ted Kingston, visited the Exeter offices and Exeter Central Library on Wednesday 27 November. The annual service point meeting took place in the Music Room of ECL on Thursday 5 December at 2.00 p.m. Following the meeting, at 3.30 p.m., Dr Anita Travers talked about the Archives and Museums Project and the preparation of 'Hidden Assets'.

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This newsletter is edited by John Draisey, County Archivist, Devon Record Office, Castle Street, EXETER, Devon, EX4 3PU, UK and is published by Devon County Council.	If you have any comments or suggestions on this newsletter please send to <a href="mailto:devrec@devon.gov.uk">devrec@devon.gov.uk</a>
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