



Bringing local history to life

From the editor

Madge Dresser, Sherrie Eugene and the Lord Mayor at the launch



In this edition we celebrate the publication of two more EPE books, including the launch of our Bristol paperback, the delivery of three school projects and the start of a brand new project in Kent. We have updates from Oxfordshire and Exmoor and news of a local history prize awarded by the VCH. We have an article from our publishers and snippets from our fantastic website, Explore. We also have an update from our Project Manager and regular features, *Meet the Team* and *Volunteer Case Study*.

First County Durham paperback now published

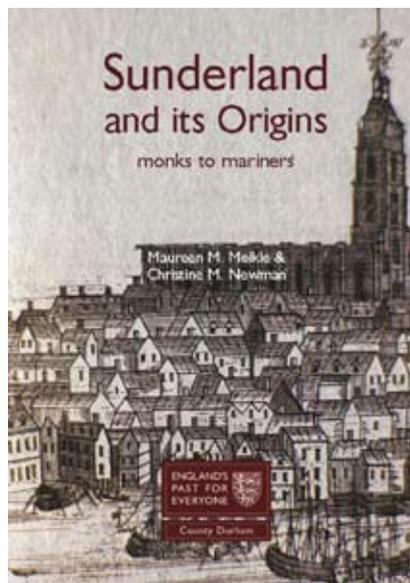
The County Durham team is celebrating the publication of its EPE paperback, *Sunderland and its Origins: Monks to Mariners*, authored by Christine Newman and Maureen Meikle (University of Sunderland), with foreword written by the historian and broadcaster Michael Wood.

This book represents a truly remarkable team effort, with key contributions from a number of specialists, including the distinguished archaeologist, Professor Rosemary Cramp, who gave generously of her expertise in respect of the Anglo-Saxon monastery of St Peter's, Monkwearmouth. Valuable input was further provided by our wonderful team of local volunteers whose work, transcribing wills and other documents, has fed into the research. Thanks are also due to the EPE editorial team for their part in producing what has been described as a 'visually stunning' publication.

The book covers the history of the locality from prehistoric times through to the creation of the parish of Sunderland in 1719. This is the first of two paperbacks to be produced as part of the

County Durham EPE project, with work now well underway on the second book, *The Townscape of Sunderland*.

Sunderland and its Origins: Monks to Mariners will be launched on 30 April at the National Glass Centre, Sunderland, appropriately located close to the site of the Anglo-Saxon monastery of St Peter's. We are delighted that Michael Wood has agreed to attend the launch.



Sunderland book cover

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Lord Mayor launches Bristol paperback



The Lord Mayor speaking at the launch

On Wednesday 12 March we celebrated the launch of our third paperback *Bristol: Ethnic Minorities and the City 1000-2001*.

The launch took place in the beautiful surroundings of The Grand Council Chamber, The Old Council House in the centre of Bristol.

The book was launched by the Lord Mayor of Bristol, Royston Griffey, JP.

The book's authors Madge Dresser and Peter Fleming spoke about their work on the project and thanked all those involved, particularly the many volunteers.

The launch was closed by award-winning, local broadcaster Sherrie Eugene.

To purchase the book visit our publisher's website www.phillimore.co.uk

Herefordshire wills inventory



The Wills Group at the Ledbury Heritage Centre

In Ledbury, Herefordshire, the Wills Group are working hard to decipher the handwriting of a seventeenth century inventory.

Until 1857 wills had to be proved in the ecclesiastical courts. Ledbury wills were proved in the diocesan court of Hereford. These documents are now kept at the Herefordshire Record Office.

When a person held land in more than one diocese their will had to be proved in the court of the Archdiocese. For Herefordshire, this meant the Archdiocese of Canterbury. These wills are now kept at the National Archives.

The value of personal goods had to be assessed as part of the probate procedure. The inventory is the list of these items. Inventories may list the contents of the house and the stock in trade of craftsmen as well as animals and crops belonging to farmers.

There are now more than 100 transcribed wills and inventories on our Explore Herefordshire website. A glossary of Inventory Terms, compiled by one of the Herefordshire volunteers, is also available. Visit www.ExploreEnglandsPast.org.uk/Herefordshire to find out more.

Schools update

This quarter we have been working on two scheduled EPE school projects with a further project in Wiltshire based on EPE materials produced with the Wylve Valley School in 2007.

In Kent, Year 6 pupils at Holy Family Primary School are exploring industry in the Medway Valley. With a focus on Maidstone and the papermaking industry, pupils looked at the role children played in the workplace and what impact the industry had on housing and the development of a place. The pupils learnt how to make their own paper, as well as looking at the history of papermaking and the role of recycling.

The River and Rowing Museum in Henley-on-Thames is currently delivering the project in Oxfordshire with Mabel Pritchard School, Oxford. Pupils from the bronze class will have the opportunity to explore the history of both Burford and Henley and look at how industry and the river have played a part in the development of the area and contributed to a sense of place. Some of the pupils' work will be recorded through audio books and kept in the school for future learning.

12 gifted and talented pupils from Bemerton School, Wiltshire started their six week project with a visit to Salisbury Museum where they had a session on agriculture. During the session pupils had the opportunity to make butter and participate in role play with costumes. The session was followed up in school with three oral history sessions, interviewing farmers about what life was like in the 1900s and how it has changed today.



Holy Family pupils learn about the papermaking industry



A word from our publishers



Anthony Lovell, Editorial Assistant in Phillimore's offices

Phillimore, the Chichester-based publisher of British local and family history – now producing the EPE volumes (four to date and more in preparation) – has been active since 1897, when William Phillimore opened

his office in Chancery Lane, London. Since that time, the company has built a reputation for books of quality, and has pioneered some important ventures. Phillimore himself produced several hundred volumes of marriage register transcripts, anticipating the huge growth in the market for genealogy.

In 1986, to mark the 9th centenary, the company completed its 40-volume modern translation of Domesday Book, in a county-by-county format, and is still deeply involved in research towards an interactive electronic version of England's oldest public record.

Phillimore publishes around 50 new titles each year and now has an active back-list of some 1000 titles. The list encompasses county, town and

village histories, family, corporate and institutional histories, and a number of general 'guides' to research in these fields, of which the best-selling *Phillimore Atlas and Index of Parish Registers* is probably the best known.

Now, with hundreds of volumes in its library, and established links with the British Association for Local History (through the Phillimore Lecture), the Society of Archivists and The National Archives (through the Phillimore Prize), and with the Victoria County History (through EPE), it looks to the future as a division of the newly-formed History Press.

For further information visit our website: www.phillimore.co.uk

Victoria County History awards local history prize



Bantock House welcomes Deaf visitors

A new local history prize, sponsored by Oval Projects and run jointly by Victoria County History and History Today magazine, has been awarded to a project exploring the history of Deaf people in Wolverhampton.

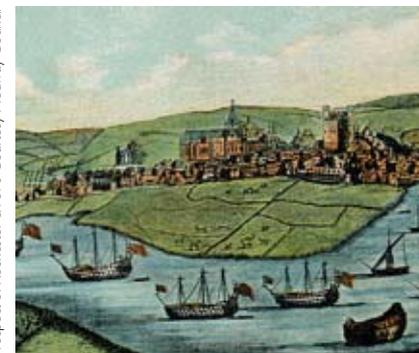
'Unheard Stories' will research and record the experiences of Deaf people living, working and studying in Wolverhampton and who use sign

language to communicate. The project hopes to promote a greater understanding of Deaf culture and history across the wider community by producing an exhibition and DVD featuring local Deaf people.

Project co-ordinator Linda Ellis stated: "This award has allowed us to involve Deaf pupils from a local school in work we are doing to create an educational resource for Deaf and hearing students. The resource will examine the use of sign language through the personal experiences of local Deaf people. The young people will be given lessons in Deaf history and will be supported in interviewing members of our Deaf community to find out at first hand how the use of sign language in education has changed over the last 70 years."

The award will be matched by Wolverhampton Arts and Museums Service. Other project partners include British Deaf History Society, Wolverhampton Archives and Local Studies, Zebra Uno and Deansfield School.

New Kent project



Prospect of Rochester c. 1690 Courtesy Medway Council

Our second Kent project, in partnership with the University of Greenwich and Kent County Council, looks at the Medway Towns from 1550-1900. The project will trace the transformation of the four separate communities of Strood, Rochester, Chatham, and Gillingham into the urban conurbation known as the Medway Towns.

The research will explore how the development of the Royal Naval Dockyards shaped these local communities and impacted on the lives of people who lived and worked on the banks of the River Medway.

If you would like to be involved please email s.a.dunster@gre.ac.uk



Meet the team

Kerry Whitston - VCH & EPE Publications Manager



Kerry on a visit to Parham House, EPE Sussex

As publications manager for the VCH and EPE I am responsible for maintaining consistently high standards in terms of the style, look, and feel of our published output. I manage the production workflow and schedule all publications, making sure they are delivered on time and to budget. Once the lead editors have passed a publication to the

production team I prepare the manuscript for press and do a final proofread and copyedit. With support from the production assistant, Jessica Porter, I coordinate editorial board meetings and the peer review panel, keep in regular contact with county teams and provide guidance on the production process.

I enjoy the variety of working on the VCH red books, EPE paperbacks, communications materials and websites. It is rewarding to be able to apply my skills to a project which seeks to engage and involve people from diverse backgrounds in the history of their community.

Prior to joining the project I studied French at the University of Sheffield and Linguistics at Oxford University. I also spent a year travelling and working abroad, and three years at a financial publisher, where I was deputy editor on a range of pan-European journals.

Exmoor update



Exmoor ponies on Winsford Hill

Winter is a quiet period so far with no events scheduled until April. Since the successful Archaeological Forum on 1 December work has concentrated on completing our book *Exmoor: the Making of an English Upland* and improving the website. The final drafts have now been submitted for editing.

Our Explore website has been greatly enlarged and hopefully provides something to interest everyone. The site covers the parishes in the study area

and includes images of churches, farm studies, Exmoor icons like the ponies and Lorna Doone, documentary studies, historic buildings, and other aspects of the history of Exmoor, particularly the forest. Some recent additions include Anglo-Saxon place names, a Dulverton shoemaker who turned to crime, an 18th-century Wanted notice, the links between a Simonsbath mine and murder, and several articles on poverty and the workhouse. More material has been collected on poor-law doctors, wills, and inventories, and should appear on the Explore site over the coming months. We hope to double the available content over the next two months including many more images.

Other aspects of the Exmoor project have come to an end but Rob Wilson-North will be speaking about the volunteer project at the Institute of Field Archaeologists Conference in Swansea in March.

From the project manager

Another three months have passed, and it's not been a quiet time of year. However, it's great to see *Sunderland and its Origins: Monks to Mariners* in print, while *Burford: Buildings and People in a Cotswold Town* will be published in May and four more books are currently being edited.

Several of the county and support staff attended the *Bristol: Ethnic Minorities and the City* book launch on 12 March. Many of the locals who contributed to the book were present, and our publishers, Phillimore, had a stall. The evening culminated in fascinating and enjoyable presentations from Peter Fleming and Madge Dresser at Waterstones, followed by a book signing. It has been a pleasure working with all those involved in the Bristol EPE project, and we hope that partnerships between the VCH and the University of the West of England will continue into the future.

However, the big news is that Aretha George, our Education and Skills Manager, is leaving the project to join Heritage Lottery Fund as Policy Advisor, Learning and Participation.

Aretha has done a fantastic job over the past two and a half years to deliver eight schools projects, electronic resources from the first four of which will be available at the beginning of May. On top of this, the volunteer programme has exceeded expectations - we have worked with over 275 volunteers to date. Aretha has also found time to coordinate additional outreach projects and made many friends along the way, so we'll all miss her. Although a hard act to follow, we'll be recruiting for a new manager in April. Best wishes to Aretha in her new job from all of us.

The EPE 2007 Annual Report will soon be available online.

For those with access to the administrative section of the EPE websites, please note that the Extranet is now live, if you want to add any content.



Parham House survey reveals...



At work at Parham House

The images above are taken from a selection on the Sussex Explore site www.ExploreEnglandsPast.org.uk/Sussex

They show specialists from the Archaeological Prospection Services of Southampton (APSS) conducting a Geophysical Survey, commissioned by EPE, at Parham House in late 2006.

APSS investigated an area to the south and east of the house to try and establish a phasing and development pattern for the estate. The survey also sought to discover if the orientation of the modern house had changed from its past, for example by looking for previous driveways or roads.

APSS decided that a resistivity survey would be the most suitable for this brief. A resistivity survey measures the varying ability of soils to conduct an electrical current which is passed through them. Features beneath the ground such as walls, rubble scatter and stone coffins will give a high resistance reading, whilst



features such as ditches, large pits and drains will produce a low reading.

The survey identified a number of features in the area which indicated earlier phases of development, possibly associated with the dismantled village of Parham. It is thought that a semi-circular high resistance feature may represent the remains of a Bronze Age barrow.

Further investigations using Ground Penetrating Radar (GPR) has also revealed possible medieval remains in the park to the south-east of the house.

Although the survey results will require further analysis and investigation, they form an important basis for future research into the history of this Elizabethan house. They throw up the exciting prospect of the possibility of an excavation of the grounds, to find out if the anomalies identified in the survey are in fact the medieval remains of Parham or other geophysical features.

EPE at national exhibition

EPE and VCH will have a stand at the 'Who Do You Think You Are?' exhibition, being held at Olympia, London on Friday 2- Sunday 4 May.

Described as 'The National History Show' the event promises to be a gathering of history experts, TV historians and enthusiasts from across the world. This year the show will also incorporate 'Military History Live' and 'Discover Archaeology Live'. With over 20,000 visitors expected this will be a great

opportunity to showcase our work to the public.

We will be publicly launching our Explore website, as well as profiling our schools resources and selling our paperbacks. Professor John Beckett, Director VCH will also give a lecture highlighting the relevance of VCH and EPE resources when pinpointing a family history to a particular time and place.

Please visit us on stand 288!

75 years at the IHR



The Little Big Red Book

This year the Victoria County History is celebrating 75 years based at the Institute of Historical Research, University of London.

As well as running a special series of seminars and hosting an evening reception, the VCH has produced a celebratory publication 'The Little Big Red Book'.

Beautifully illustrated with images from the VCH and EPE volumes, the book includes publication updates, an article by Professor John Beckett, Director VCH, and a light-hearted delve into the VCH archives.

The book is now available to buy from the Boydell & Brewer Ltd website www.boydell.co.uk

An exhibition of specially commissioned photographs is also currently displayed on the VCH website www.victoriacountyhistory.ac.uk



Our exhibition stand on display at the Houses of Parliament



Oxfordshire Update



The Henley Census Group toasts its first Christmas!

The second Oxfordshire EPE project, on Henley-on-Thames, is now firmly underway. A volunteer Census Group is busy transcribing the censuses for particular parts of the town, including its 19th-century suburbs. At a later stage we hope to undertake some fieldwork to try to identify the houses on the ground - fortunately as the weather gets warmer! Some of the indefatigable Burford Probate Group have meanwhile decided that the lure of another town

is too much, and have agreed to begin work on some Henley wills. I am particularly grateful to Barbara Allison for agreeing to coordinate this, based on her long experience with the Burford group.

With the first draft chapters (on medieval Henley) due for completion at the end of March, we are also pressing on with our own in-house research. Themes currently being explored include the

origins of Henley as a planned medieval town, and its crucial medieval role as an inland port and trans-shipment point, funnelling grain into the growing city of London. Our two architectural consultants (one for the medieval and one for the later period) are also making progress, and already we have some dendrochronological dating for one or two early buildings.

Members of the Oxfordshire Buildings Record continue to lend their help and expertise, and in February enjoyed a stimulating recording day at the medieval White Hart Inn. As always, this raised more questions than it answered! We are also fortunate to enjoy a good relationship with the many local historians in Henley, and it was a pleasure earlier this month to give a well-attended gallery talk (on Henley as an inland port) at Henley River & Rowing Museum.

Meanwhile the Burford project is reaching its culmination, with page proofs sitting on my desk as I type. More on that next time...

Volunteer case study: Sue Spurr, Exmoor

I am in my fifties and am married with two grown-up sons. I work as a part-time secretary and administrative assistant, and I am also studying towards a degree through Exeter University's Department of Lifelong Learning. I am interested in local history and have a special interest in rural vernacular architecture having grown up in a timber-framed house on a small farm in the Sussex Weald.

I heard about EPE at a talk given by Rob Wilson-North, the Exmoor National Park Archaeologist. I was particularly keen to see the Exmoor farmsteads and to learn more about the history of the area.

Working as a farmstead-recording volunteer has been great fun and a hugely interesting learning experience. I



Sue Spurr, Exmoor volunteer

have met many friendly people, visited many farmsteads, and have seen parts of Exmoor that I would otherwise not have seen. I feel privileged to be able to contribute to such a project.

This newsletter is distributed electronically to save resources. If you need a hard copy please contact us.

Please send all enquiries and newsletter contributions to melanie.hackett@sas.ac.uk



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