

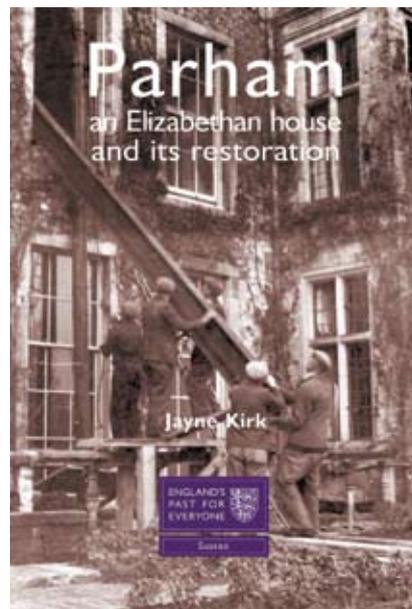


Bringing local history to life

From the editor

In this issue we celebrate the launch of our latest paperback; the completion of another school project; and the launch of our *Schools Learning Zone*. We also have exciting news of our conference, taking place in Bristol in October.

Our Kent project leader talks about a seventeenth-century diary being transcribed by volunteers, and we have updates on the findings of a recent dig in Oxfordshire, and a church survey in Ledbury. Our volunteer case study is provided by one of our youngest volunteers and we profile our new administrator in 'Meet the Team'.



The front cover of the Parham book

Latest paperback reveals hidden house history



Professor John Beckett presents a book to Lady Emma

This month saw the launch of our latest paperback, *'Parham: an Elizabethan House and its Restoration'*.

The event took place in the Great Hall at Parham House in Sussex, by kind permission of Lady Emma Barnard. The launch was attended by supporters and volunteers on the project, and a good number

of books were sold on the night. Speeches were given by Lady Emma; Dr Jayne Kirk; and Professor John Beckett, Director of the Victoria County History. Professor Maurice Howard, University of Sussex, oversaw the proceedings.

Written by Dr Jayne Kirk, and with a foreword by Sir Simon Jenkins, the book tells the story of the house, and the three families who have lived in it, over the past 400 years. Buy the book now from the publisher's website www.phillimore.co.uk

The launch of our next paperback, *'Exmoor: the Making of an English Upland'* will take place on Wednesday 3 June at Dulverton Town Hall.

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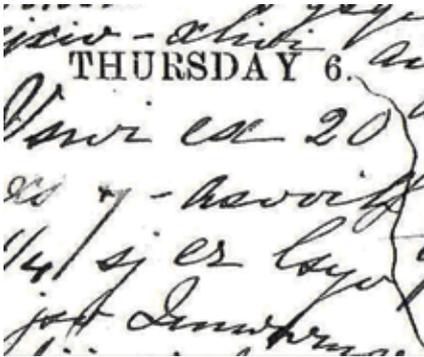
understanding the built environment

Volunteer Case Study

Rebecca Short, Sussex



Dear diary...



A clipping from the governess's diary

The diary for 1860 of Honoria Roebuck, a 16 year old governess, came to the attention of volunteer Astrid Salmon while she was working on the first EPE Kent project. Although the journal of this Victorian teenager, held in the Medway Archives and Local Studies Centre, was not of direct relevance to the Medway Valley project, Astrid painstakingly transcribed the tiny handwriting that was crammed into the pocket diary and uncovered a wealth of information about this young woman's life.

Honoria meticulously recorded her daily work and leisure activities, her health and emotions and kept an account of her income and expenditure. Some of this detail will find its way into our second Kent paperback, 'The Medway Towns 1550-1900'.

A range of sources allowed a fleshing out of Honoria's life. Born in York in 1843, the daughter of a Methodist minister, by the age of seven Honoria was living with her maternal aunts in Brompton, Gillingham. They ran a small school and the diary tells us that by 1860 Honoria had pupils of her own, the young sons of army officers. As well as recording the teaching of her young charges Honoria also notes in her diary that she was receiving ciphering lessons. That her confidence and skill in this area grew is evidenced by the second diary volume that has survived, which is written entirely in code.

Revealing the secrets of the second diary is a daunting challenge, but Astrid is willing to tackle it. Transcribing cramped Victorian handwriting is all the more difficult when it is impossible to make immediate sense of the words on the page. Luckily it was relatively easy to break the code – a simple matter of substituting each letter with the one that comes five earlier in the alphabet. Now transcription is a two phase activity – first decide what the letters are and then decode them. This task may take some time!

EPE in schools



Pupils from The Bolsover School in character

Our latest school project, exploring the life of a mining community in the 1900s took place in partnership with Derbyshire County Council, a history Advanced Skills Teacher and pupils from The Bolsover School and New Bolsover Primary School.

Following research in school, pupils from The Bolsover School waited, in costume, at interesting points around New Bolsover village, where they were interviewed by pupils from the primary school. The audio recordings of the interviews, along with images and local history information from the project, will now be uploaded to webpages developed by the pupils.

The Sunderland school project is also taking place this term and resources from both will be available from the *Schools Learning Zone*.

Free teaching resources? You BETT



Our Schools Learning Zone 'Explorers'.

In January we attended the BETT education and technology exhibition at Olympia, London, to launch our *Schools Learning Zone*. BETT is an annual event, attracting tens of thousands of delegates, including teachers and learning professionals. We talked to many of these at the event and provided demonstrations of the SLZ.

The SLZ provides free access to learning resources for teachers, developed from our own school

projects. Resources show how local history can be taught across the curriculum and explore themes including fishing communities, diversity in a city through time and Tudor architecture. Further resources will be added during 2009 and interactive materials for students are currently being created.

Several teachers have already signed up to receive SLZ updates. If you would also like to receive these please email learning@epe.org.uk

Oxfordshire rediscovers lost medieval church

Stephen Milesion explains the site to a local group



In the last newsletter we briefly mentioned the exciting discovery of three human burials at a site near Henley, by volunteer excavators working with the Oxfordshire VCH/EPE team. Since then we've obtained radiocarbon dates for the burials and started to make sense of the site.

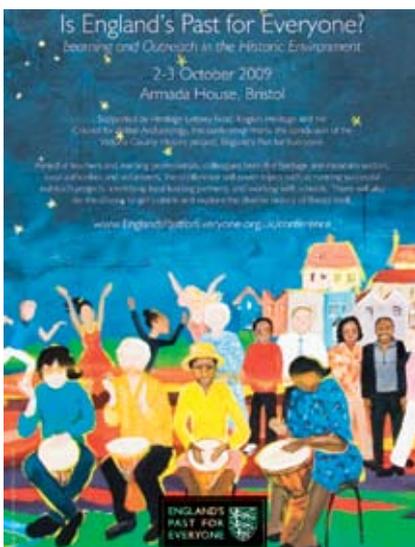
The dig was organised to try to pinpoint the 'lost' medieval church of Bix Gibwyn, which was downgraded

to a chapel in the 15th century, and finally abandoned after the Reformation. VCH work by Stephen Milesion identified an isolated enclosure called 'old chapel' on an 18th-century estate map, which now has two modern cottages on it. Thanks to the expertise and enthusiasm of volunteers from the South Oxfordshire Archaeological Group, we followed this through with some geophysics and a couple of small trial trenches.

At the eleventh hour an eagle-eyed digger spotted the first trace of the burials, which have now been dated to the late 12th or earlier 13th century. One was a young woman with appalling dental abscesses, another a young man, and the third an older person in their fifties. The burials make it virtually certain that we have the right site, and SOAG hope to undertake some further work shortly using ground-penetrating radar. The location is significant, since it confirms that this was a more densely settled area in the Middle Ages, before the focus shifted southwards to the modern Henley road. The site also produced large quantities of Roman pottery.

Alongside this the EPE team is pressing on with its Henley paperback, with important input from probate and census groups and other volunteers. The Burford book has effectively sold out, and we are hoping for a reprint soon.

Is England's Past for Everyone?



Our conference poster

Join us for our celebratory event!

'Is England's Past for Everyone? Learning and Outreach in the Historic Environment' takes place at Armada

House conference centre in Bristol city centre on 2- 3 October 2009.

The conference will include presentations, panels and workshops, covering topics such as running successful outreach projects; identifying local funding partners; and working with schools and volunteers.

It is a must for all those who value the opportunity to share ideas with colleagues, contribute to best practise debate and influence policy and decision makers in the sector. It is aimed at teachers and learning professionals, the heritage and museum sectors, local authorities and volunteers.

www.England'sPastforEveryone.org.uk/conference

Anglo-American 2009

The Institute of Historical Research annual Anglo-American conference will this year look at the theme of 'Cities'.

Taking place on Thursday 2 - Friday 3 July the conference will examine how cities have shaped the affairs of mankind for the past 10,000 years.

The Centre for Local History will run a session entitled 'The City: Idea and Reality in England'. This will include papers from Professor John Beckett, Director VCH; and Peter Fleming, author of our EPE Bristol paperback.

Those interested in attending should visit www.history.ac.uk/aac2009 for further information.



Meet the team

Carly de Jonge, Project Administrator



I joined the EPE project in February. As the project administrator I provide day-to-day support to all elements of the project, including organising and minuting the project board and

administering our many book launches and events.

I work closely with the Communications Manager on our events and marketing work and also provide support to the Education and Skills Manager, liaising with local partners and updating our schools' web pages.

Prior to joining EPE I worked in various publishing roles, and before this worked at the Australian High Commission in London. I have a BA (Hons) in Classics and a BMus in piano, both from the University of Adelaide, Australia.

The Exmoor Oral History Archive



Simonsbath House today

In the opening years of the 21st century a remarkable set of oral history recordings was made on Exmoor. With the encouragement and support of several bodies including the Local Heritage Initiative, a partnership between the Heritage Lottery Fund, Nationwide Building Society and the Countryside Agency, Birdie Johnson travelled Exmoor listening to older Exmoor residents and recording their stories. The wide range of people covered in 200 hours of recording includes labourers and maidservants, craftsmen and professionals, farmers and landowners.

Among those interviewed was Lady Margaret Fortescue who remembered her childhood spent at Simonsbath House after a fire at their home at Castle Hill, Devon. She recalled that it was always cold with bare linoleum on the floors and peat fires, which always smoked. Although there were panelled reception rooms the bedrooms were primitive and there was only one bathroom for the entire house. Despite this the Fortescues squeezed in a butler, footman, valet, ladies maid, cook, house, kitchen and scullery maids and an odd job man!

The oral history material has provided useful background for research on the Exmoor paperback. To find out more about Simonsbath House visit our Exmoor Explore site.

The Exmoor Oral History Archive is available at the Somerset Record Office and online at www.somerset.gov.uk/archives

From the project manager

It's been a frantic but fascinating few months. I've been privileged to visit the Bolsover school project, and was impressed by pupils' acting and interviewing skills. The Schools Learning Zone went live in January, thanks to Skye and Dima. Teaching resources from Bristol, Cornwall, Oxfordshire and Sussex are online, with further uploads every month.

The publications team are churning out paperbacks; it's great to see the hard work of volunteers and authors in print. We had an enjoyable evening at the Sussex book launch in Parham. Don't miss the Exmoor and Herefordshire launches this summer.

Alongside this, county teams have added over 3000 assets to the Explore website, to which visits have tripled over 2008. To support us, we welcome Carly de Jonge as our new administrator and Nick Hall, who is working on a six-month learning project.

John Beckett led an evaluation session, Influencing the future of the VCH at a staff meeting in March. This feeds into activities and sustainability plans, which include upgrading our websites in line with IHR policy. Please send us any feedback or ideas for evaluation in 2009, culminating in our October conference.

We recently attended English Heritage's Missing Out? conference, which examined how to broaden the appeal of heritage to family groups, and gave us lots of ideas. Now I'm off to the annual archaeologists' conference to run a session on buildings archaeology from around the world.

Look out for the EPE 2008 Annual Report - available on our website from mid-April.

Surveying Ledbury



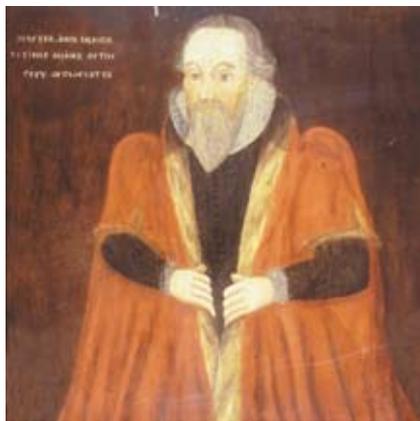
Herefordshire volunteers using a theodolite

Ledbury volunteers have been receiving instruction from buildings archaeologists Rebecca Lane and Kate Chapman, to conduct a survey of Ledbury parish church.

Last month they took detailed measurements and a photographic record inside the building, following which they began work on the exterior. After all the snow and rain earlier in the month they were blessed with a beautiful sunny day.

The volunteers learned a number of techniques. Everyone had a chance to use a laser theodolite to obtain readings that will produce a computer-generated drawing of the east end of the church. Others worked patiently with tape measures, pencil and permatrace paper to produce detailed, stone-by-stone drawings of features such as the wall around the doorway in the south aisle.

Locality and Region seminar series announced



c. 1600-1620, portrait of John Falkner, 4 times Mayor of Gloucester © Gloucester Museums Service

We are pleased to announce that Professor Robert Tittler, (Distinguished Professor Emeritus, Concordia University) has agreed to give a seminar to mark the Centre for Local History's Locality and Region 2009/10 seminar series.

Entitled, 'Cultural Relations between London and Provincial England: Portraits, Painters and Publics in Early Modern England', the seminar will take place at 5.15pm on Tuesday 19 May in Room N336 (Senate House, North Block, 3rd Floor). The seminar is free and wine and

nibbles will be served. No booking is required. Other seminars in this series include:

Tuesday 5 May, Dr William Philpott (King's College London), 'Landscapes of Battle: the Somme 1914-2008'

Tuesday 2 June, Dr Brent Elliott (Royal Horticultural Society) 'Public Parks as a catalyst for local development'

Tuesday 16 June, Professor Andy Wood (University of East Anglia) 'Memory, custom and social conflict in Early Modern England'

Find out more about our 2009/10 seminar series from the Victoria County History website. If you would like to join the seminar emailing list contact elizabeth.williamson@sas.ac.uk

The Locality and Region seminar takes place on Tuesdays and is part of the respected seminar programme run by the Institute of Historical Research. Senate House is situated off Malet St and Russell Square.

Local history panels online



A panel from Bristol: Ethnic Minorities and the City 1000-2001

A key element of the EPE paperbacks is a series of original panels which offer inspiration for those wishing to research their own local area. The panels provide the opportunity to look at aspects of our research in more depth and aim to give an insight into the sources we use. Topics covered include census returns, landscape history, copyhold tenure, medieval estate surveys, architectural plans, reconstruction drawings and transport history.

These panels are gradually being made available online from our interactive website, www.ExploreEnglandsPast.org.uk Explore provides free access to 1000s of local history resources uncovered during our research, from transcribed wills to audio files.

Panels currently available online cover topics such as the 1851 census, oral history records, property deeds, and apprentice records. Panels can be viewed as pdf files or can be downloaded as individual items including images, maps and charts.

To view the panels go to the Explore website and click on 'Explore Your Own Local History'.

Where Do You Think You're From?

Our Education & Skills Manager, Slysie Dillon, speaks to visitors



We were pleased to have a stand at the popular national history show, 'Who Do You Think You Are?' at Olympia, London in late February.

The show provided the opportunity to talk to members of the public

about our many resources, from the traditional VCH red books to our Explore website. We spoke to over 1000 people over the weekend and many signed up to receive copies of this newsletter and email updates on our *Schools Learning Zone*.

Did you know?
 You can get free online access to the complete text of many of the VCH red books via British History Online. Visit www.british-history.ac.uk and search for **your** local area.

Our Exmoor Team Leader, Mary Siraut, gave a lecture entitled 'Tracing ancestors through medieval documents' which attracted over 100 delegates and many questions. Notes from the lecture are now available from the EPE website.

Secretary of State, Andy Burnham, being interviewed by students from Gravesham School



Volunteer case study: Rebecca Short, Sussex

Parham House, the subject of the EPE Sussex project



I am 20 and have lived in West Sussex all of my life. Currently I am in my second year at York University where I am reading for a degree in History. This was a favourite subject of mine at school because I found

it so fascinating. For the last two summer vacations, I have been volunteering for the Sussex EPE project which I heard about while doing some voluntary work at the West Sussex Record Office.

Since joining the project, I have been trained to handle and read old documents. It is much more interesting to touch the original documents rather than read about them in books. The more work I do, the more I learn and understand and I have brought a lot of enthusiasm and my computer literacy skills to the project. The experience I am getting will be helpful when deciding what to do after I graduate. Overall, I have found the work very enjoyable and useful.

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 the editor melanie.hackett@sas.ac.uk



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