



Bringing local history to life

From the editor

Welcome to the autumn edition of EPE News.

In this issue we celebrate the launch of our latest book, look at some successes from our historic environment research programme and provide details of our school competition.

We also have an update from Oxfordshire, the latest on our Explore and *Schools Learning Zone* websites and research findings from Brighton and Hove and Exmoor.

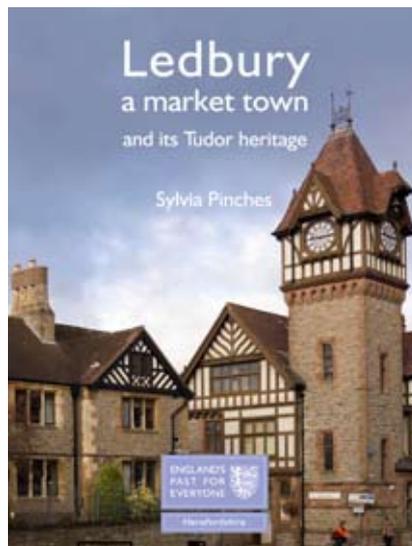
Ledbury book launched



Professor John Beckett presents a copy of the book to Sir Roy Strong

The latest book in our paperback series, *'Ledbury: a Market Town and its Tudor Heritage'*, was launched at St Katherine's Hall in the town.

An entertaining speech was given by well-known historian and resident of Herefordshire, Sir Roy Strong, who also launched our Herefordshire



The Ledbury book cover

projects in 2005. Janet Cooper, Chair of the VCH Herefordshire Trust welcomed guests, and author Sylvia Pinches thanked all those who had supported her in the production of the book.

The event was attended by over eighty volunteers, friends of the project and representatives from local funding partners, Herefordshire County Council and University of Gloucestershire.

Written by Dr Sylvia Pinches and published by Phillimore & Co. Ltd, the book tells the story of Ledbury from 1558, when Elizabeth I confiscated the bishop's manor and estate, to the present day.

EPE paperbacks can be purchased from www.phillimore.co.uk

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From the project manager Me and Miss Hicks

Alan Thacker retired as the VCH's executive editor in July. We wish him luck with the many projects he's working on (including some VCH and EPE editing). But most of all a big thank you for his, and the rest of the editorial board's, hard work on the paperbacks, which has helped make them such a success. Antonia Catchpole has also just departed the Oxfordshire team and we wish her good health and happiness during her maternity leave.

Enjoyed the Ledbury launch and talking to Roy Strong and our HLF monitor also joined us, who has been very supportive. Four more books will be published in October with long-awaited reprints of our Bristol, Cornwall and Burford books. I look forward to seeing you at the launches.

There's still plenty of work to do on web and school resources, as well as evaluating all aspects of the project. Sadly, I will be missing some of this as I'm saying good bye to the project on 16 October. But I leave its completion in able hands. I look forward to seeing many of you at the EPE conference at the beginning of October.



Cornwall volunteers take part in church recording

Cornwall volunteer, Fran Deacon, tells us more about her investigation into the life of Miss Elizabeth Hicks. Read the full version of this article on the Cornwall website.

Little did I know when I joined the Cornwall VCH group that it would lead to a great obsession, an involvement in the life and times of one Elizabeth Hicks.

Researching the wills for the period c1770-1850 in the parish of St Stephen in Brannel, I came across a document relating to Miss Elizabeth Hicks (probate 5 August 1843). Hers was an unusually long will, taking up five pages of small but easily deciphered writing. The total of her assets amounted to 'under £1,500' and it was clear that here was a spinster whose connections spread far and wide, through Cornwall and beyond. It is the sheer volume of beneficiaries that makes the will so appealing and initial research suggests that the majority of them are part



The farmhouse and outbuildings owned by Miss Hicks c.1880

of a wide and complex family tree. I noted that many bequests were made to women, in particular widows of mariners or naval seamen.

My research has been both exhaustive and exhausting, taking in census returns, parish records, newspaper cuttings, tithe maps and mining histories to name just a few. It has been an exciting and rewarding journey and the fascination will remain. However it is time to move on and allow Elizabeth Hicks to step out of my dreams.

Name our 'Explorers' and win Amazon vouchers



Our 'Explorers'

School pupils are being invited to help us name our *Schools Learning Zone* mascots, with the chance to win Amazon vouchers for themselves and their schools.

Designed by illustrator Shaun Askew, the 'Explorers' will guide pupils around the SLZ interactive area. Posters promoting the website and competition have been sent to over

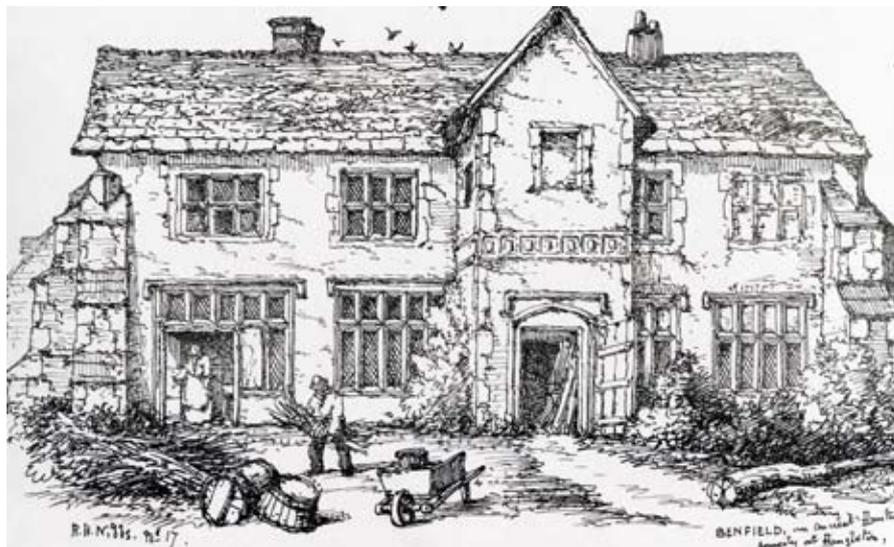
30,000 schools, thanks to project partners English Heritage, who included our poster in the latest edition of their *Heritage Learning* magazine.

The competition is open to pupils aged 5-14 and closes on Friday 11 December. Full terms and conditions are available from our *Schools Learning Zone* website, where copies of our poster are also available to download.

The *Schools Learning Zone* provides free learning resources for pupils and teachers and has been developed following our projects in schools. Materials include lesson plans, timelines, activities and images and cover themes such as the Tudors, agriculture, industry and diversity and migration.



A snippet from Brighton and Hove



Benfield House, Hangleton

The City of Brighton and Hove has spread over a dozen parishes on the South Downs. Brighton did not become a town until the early 1500s, its residents packed into a tiny area beside the sea close to their net shops and capstans which stood below the town's low and crumbly cliff front. Between about 1530 and 1700 the South Downs was peppered with new and enlarged country houses. The Downs were popular both for hunting and as a means of travel between the east and west ends of this long, narrow county. By 1700, country houses stood every few miles. The number of houses declined from the 1760s,

when the larger estates began to expand by acquiring smaller ones or those with owners in debt, and demolished the country houses.

The fashion for buying tracts of downland and building a new house or extending an old one affected the area from the 1530s, when land once owned by Lewes Priory was sold. This opened up the chance to lease from the Crown or to buy estates. A combination of factors enabled these new owners or lessors to develop large sheep-corn farms on their new estates. At least three of the families who invested had experience of down land estates

and the fourth ran large cattle farms in the Weald.

Before 1500 the only house used in this area by gentry was Benfield, a hunting lodge used by the wealthy Covert family with estates in Slaugham to the north in the Sussex Weald. The only entirely new building was Hangleton Place (now a pub) in brick and stone, built by the Bellingham family in the mid 1500s in a courtyard style. Patcham Place was built in timber before 1552 by Richard Shelley a son of the owner of Michelgrove. This estate was bought by Anthony Stapley, the Regicide who signed the death warrant for Charles I. The Tudor house is now hidden behind a facade of mathematical tiles. The Shirleys demolished the old house at Preston and built Preston Place in stone and timber in the 1590s. This house has been greatly altered since. The first Stanmer House was developed from an older building by the Michelbourne family and most of it was demolished when Henry Pelham commissioned Nicholas Dubois to design the austere 1720s villa that is there today.

New resources on Explore website

The latest material available from our Explore website is 'hot off the press' from our Exmoor paperback, launched in June.

The new resources come from our Exmoor panels, which investigate sources used to research local history. Materials now online include 'Conservation in action', a study of the restoration of a 19th century sawmill in Simonsbath, as well as studies of 19th century farmyards and deserted farmsteads.

Visit our Explore website www.ExploreEnglandsPast.org.uk for free access to 1000s of local history resources.



Restoration of the saw mill

Local history seminars

The autumn programme of the Locality and Region seminar begins on Tuesday 13 October.

Run by the Victoria County History and held at the Institute of Historical Research, University of London, the seminars are free and all are welcome to attend.

Visit www.history.ac.uk/seminars for updated programmes or email elizabeth.williamson@sas.ac.uk to join the mailing list.



Meet the team

Catherine Cavanagh, Project Manager



As EPE project manager, I am responsible for the project overall – schedules, budget, staff, liaison with partners, reporting and quality control for our products. It's been a pleasure working with such a talented team in London and England. I've enjoyed visiting the 10 counties, learning more about their local history and meeting the volunteers.

My background is in archaeology, including two years in the Lebanon and several years managing projects for a contracting unit, before monitoring archaeology in central London for English Heritage. My subsequent experience running a web and training project for EH brought me to the VCH. However, I'm still an archaeologist at heart and member of the Institute for Archaeologists and Chartered Management Institute.

My new job is working for the City of London in Epping Forest on another Heritage Lottery funded project. We'll be creating a new interpretation centre, improving visitor access and the way the forest and livestock are managed. I'm excited but will miss the friendship and shared expertise of EPE.

Settling the poor in Dunster?

Under the laws of settlement paupers could be sent back to parishes where they were born, married or had been in service or apprenticed. It was deemed that such parishes were responsible for their poor and not the places where they fell into poverty. It is well known that parishes would go to any lengths to remove paupers from their books and there are instances of women in labour being driven over the parish boundary. In many places settlement certificates had to be produced by those seeking work. The certificate was an undertaking by a person's native parish that they would provide for them if necessary.

St John's parish in Wapping seems to have used more ingenuity than most. Mary Morse, a girl from Staffordshire, served as a covenant servant at the Gun Tavern in Wapping. It was probably there

that she met clothworker Thomas Mallet. They were married at Stepney church on 6 June 1714 and settled in Wapping. They had two children Mary born c.1719 and Elizabeth born c.1723. Thomas went to serve as a soldier and was not heard of again. Mary went on parish relief with her children but in c.1731 produced another child Robert. This was probably the last straw for the parish. Presumably unable to find the father, the officers claimed that Thomas Mallet had served an apprenticeship to Henry Coffin of Dunster. Henry Coffin had been a clothier in Dunster in the 1690s and had probably died long since. Enquiries at Dunster found no-one who remembered any Thomas Mallet. However, the claim was enough for Wapping parish to send a Staffordshire woman and her three Wapping-born children to Dunster in Somerset in 1733.

Learning online

The Wiltshire Teacher Pack is now available from our Schools Learning Zone. This material explores the history of agriculture in Wiltshire, based around the following periods: Iron Age; Medieval Farming; Agricultural Revolution; Agriculture in Living Memory.

The pack includes teacher notes, lesson plans and resources which offer interesting and challenging ways in which pupils can learn about the history of agriculture. The material was designed by teachers at Wylve Valley Primary School. To download this free Teacher Pack and others, visit www.EnglandsPastForEveryone.org.uk/Schools



Pupil with drawing of Iron Age roundhouse

Christopher Elrington

We are very sorry to announce the death of Professor Christopher Elrington, much-respected General Editor of the Victoria County History from 1977 until 1994.

Professor Elrington joined the VCH in 1959, and during his career excelled in all aspects of managing, editing and writing the VCH.

Even after his retirement he gave his time generously to the cause of local history. In 1996 he undertook a 'Hike for History', walking over a thousand miles through every English county and raising much needed funds for the VCH Trust.

He will be sadly missed.



Exploring the historic environment

Stainby Farm, Hardwick estate. One of a number of farmsteads which were comprehensively remodelled.



The Historic Environment research programme is central to the EPE project. Commissioned architectural and archaeological reports directly inform the three main outputs of the project - books, learning materials and the Explore website - and the quality of this research continues to exceed expectations.

Highlights of the research programme so far include a new interpretation, complete with reconstruction drawing of the landscape around Hylton Castle in Sunderland; the archaeology challenging the local assertion that a Mousehole merchant's house was the only survivor of the Spanish Raid of 1595; the discovery through geophysical survey of a lost graveyard in the grounds of Parham House and tree ring dating of a number of the house's roof trusses; and the detailed survey and analysis of four of Exmoor's 19th century farmsteads.

In recent months, we have received the final reports from

EPE conference - last chance to book

There's still time to book a place on our national conference, *'Is England's Past for Everyone? Learning and Outreach in the Historic Environment'*.

Presentations and workshops will be given by representatives from Heritage Lottery Fund, English Heritage, Council for British Archaeology and many more. With keynotes from English Heritage

Trent and Peak Archaeology and Herefordshire Archaeology who were commissioned to work on the Hardwick and Medieval Ledbury projects respectively. Richard Sheppard of Trent and Peak Archaeology conducted a survey of the farms on the Hardwick Estate, attempting to link their physical development to expenditure by the 6th Duke of Devonshire on improving the estate. There were two quite different contributions on the archaeology of Ledbury. Keith Ray examined Ledbury's prehistoric and Romano-British landscape, while Nigel Baker proposed a model for reconstructing Ledbury's medieval plot boundaries, testing data generated by a volunteer group which had measured burgage plot widths. These two contributions were supplemented by a community archaeology project which opened test pit excavations in a number of the town's gardens and which was reported in the Winter 2008 edition of EPE News.

Upon completion of the Historic Environment research program, all of the reports, chapters and survey material will be available on the EPE Explore site, while edited sections of the reports will continue to be published in the EPE paperback series.

Chair, Baroness Andrews; historian and broadcaster Michael Wood; and Chief Curator of Historic Royal Palaces Lucy Worsley; this promises to be an informative and enjoyable event.

Visit our website for more details www.EnglandsPastforEveryone.org.uk/conference

Pupils celebrate



Year 9 pupils host the celebration event

In early July, Year 5 (ages 9 – 10) pupils from New Bolsover Primary School and Year 9 (ages 13 – 14) pupils from The Bolsover School received certificates in a short ceremony to celebrate the completion of the Derbyshire school project. Orlinda Dias, Derbyshire County Council, introduced the ceremony and a presentation was made by some of the Year 9 pupils.

This EPE school project aimed to explore the coal mining community of Bolsover in the 1900s. Pupils visited the National Coal Mining Museum, census research and role-play and interview activities; they also created web pages to display their work.

This has been a very successful project and thanks are due to all those involved. The resulting educational material will be on our *Schools Learning Zone* before the end of the year.

'This project has enabled a group of adults and young people to work together on something new. It has supported the development of knowledge and skills and created an experience that project participants wish to recreate.'

Orlinda Dias,
Derbyshire County Council



Oxfordshire update

Oxfordshire's second paperback, *Henley-on-Thames: Town, Trade and River*, will be launched at the River & Rowing Museum in Henley in late November. Material from the project including some of the census and wills transcripts produced by our volunteers – is now on the Explore website, along with features on particular streets and buildings, the Regatta, the Thames river trade, and the Civil War. More is being added over the next few months, so do have a look.

Meanwhile new discoveries are still continuing. Our programme of dendrochronological (tree-ring) dating has turned up the spectacularly early date of 1325 for a medieval roof in Bell Street, making this Henley's earliest dated domestic building so far – most of our dendro dates have been 15th-century, and until this discovery the earliest known house was one dated to 1405. (Dating by Dan Miles.)

The roof structure (illustrated) is of the type known as a crown-post roof, and suggests that this was part of a high-status building most likely owned by a wealthy merchant involved in the Thames river trade with London. In late summer volunteers from the South Oxfordshire Archaeological Group will also be following up our recent excavations at Bix, which turned up three medieval skeletons associated with a lost medieval chapel. Using Ground-Penetrating Radar we hope to establish the extent of the churchyard and possibly detect traces of buildings.

The Burford paperback continues to receive glowing reviews: a 7-page spread in the June edition of *Current Archaeology* (issue 231) calls it 'a model of how to do a town history'. The book sold out within months, and with requests for it coming in regularly we hope to have a reprint very soon.



Crown-post roof at 20 Bell Street, dendro-dated 1325

Volunteer case study Barbara Allison, Oxfordshire



Barbara Allison

I am 61 and have been living in Oxfordshire for 16 years. I have always been interested in history but did not study it at university because the teaching methods at the time did not excite me. Local history is more involved because you can collect the evidence yourself and look at it and discuss it with others. My enthusiasm for the subject took

me to Oxford University where I completed a Diploma and MA in Local History.

I became acquainted with the VCH when working at the Charlbury Museum. A palaeography course led to transcribing work for both of the Oxfordshire projects and I worked as the volunteer co-ordinator on the Henley project. I find it exciting to handle original documents and am now pursuing an interest in seventeenth-century women's clothing after discovering an inventory from 1632. I have enjoyed meeting like-minded people and will continue with additional projects such as making comparisons with other Oxfordshire towns.

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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