

Bringing local history to life

From the editor

Welcome to the Summer 2007 issue of EPE News.

This edition reflects the hectic quarter we've all had, with articles on the launch of the 'Explore' website, the Wiltshire paperback and a new Ledbury street names gazetteer. We hear about successful events held in Derbyshire, Exmoor and Oxfordshire

Michael Wood launches 'Explore' website

On Monday 11 June we launched our new, interactive website 'Explore England's Past'.

The site was officially launched by TV historian Michael Wood, at a reception held in Portcullis House, Westminster.

Using resources taken from the 'Explore' website, Michael Wood spoke about the importance of personal stories in building a history of our communities. He also emphasised the key role technology plays in reaching new audiences.

The reception also marked the opening of a week-long exhibition on the work of the VCH, held in the Houses of Parliament.

The exhibition was launched by the Rt Hon. Ruth Kelly MP, Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government and Minister for Women. The Secretary of State emphasised the important role an

and our education consultant in Cornwall reminds us of the importance of everything we're doing!

We also have the usual round-ups from the EPE project manager and our Bristol Volunteer Group Leader, and our now regular items, 'Meet the Team' and 'Volunteer Case Study.'

Rt. Hon Ruth Kelly MP and historian Michael Wood speaking at the VCH event



organisation such as the VCH plays in helping communities to celebrate their unique history and learn more about the place where they live.

During the week the exhibition was visited by hundreds of people and VCH and EPE staff were on hand to answer questions. The exhibition is now available to view in the IHR, or online on the EPE and VCH websites.

In this issue

page one

From the editor
Michael Wood launches 'Explore' site
EPE interactive website launched

page two

Oxon volunteers out on the town
Burford volunteers receive thanks
From the project manager
update from Catherine Cavanagh

page three

An EPE-like project in a Devon seaside town
online heritage project runs pilot
Hardwick study day
Derbyshire runs sell-out day school
Second EPE schools project complete
farm life in Exmoor

page four

Meet the team
Neil Penlington, Administrator
Why I got involved in EPE
by our Cornwall education consultant
Bristol update
report from the Volunteer Group Leader

page five

Herefordshire launches gazetteer
Ledbury street names revealed
Off to pastures new
farewell from the Kent Team Leader
First EPE book launched
Wiltshire book now available

page six

Volunteer training in Exmoor
recording a deserted farmstead
Volunteer case study
Peter Bishop, Herefordshire



Oxfordshire volunteers out on the town by Simon Townley, Team Leader



Volunteers receive a tour of Burford Priory

With Oxfordshire's Burford project moving towards completion, at the end of March the team organised a big 'thankyou' day in the town for its volunteers.

From the project manager

This year's flown by with several paperback texts nearing completion, plus frantic activity to populate the Explore site before its launch on 11 June.

Sadly, this also means that many county staff conclude their work with EPE this summer. In Cornwall, both our authors are moving on; the editorial board will be reading Jo Mattingly's book on holiday and *Cornwall and the Cross* by Nicholas Orme is already with Phillimore, our publishers. Madge Dresser and Peter Fleming are about to submit their final text on Bristol, but plan to continue their involvement with VCH. Spencer Dimmock has already left Exmoor National Park and you can read about Andrew Hann's plans below. We're hoping that everyone will stay in touch with EPE, and we know we'll see you at the book launches.

Much of the day comprised a series of talks on new findings - including a fascinating presentation on 17th-century clothing by one of the Burford Probate Group, complete with specially made props! Other talks were given by members of the EPE team and outside contributors, while Andy Stokes, the EPE ICT Manager, demonstrated how volunteers' material will appear on the new Explore website.

The climax was a specially arranged visit to Burford Priory - a country house built after the Reformation on the site of a medieval hospital, and since the 1940s home once again to a religious community.

A few weeks later we held a meeting in Henley, to start recruiting volunteers for the next stage of the Oxfordshire work.

County staff are due congratulations for the success of eleven projects to date, and have somehow balanced writing against project management. The achievements of everyone involved have been inspirational, from volunteer group leaders to English Heritage photographers, education consultants and buildings analysts. Not only have we exceeded our volunteer targets, early feedback from the education projects has been that the input of professional historians has been vital.

Have you searched [Explore England's Past](#) yet? We hope the website's beginning to reflect the hard work of our volunteers. A big thank you to all who've helped to create 'items' and 'assets', and in particular to Andy and Neil for their patient data entry, training and technical help. The website's looking

An enthusiastic audience of nearly 60 turned up to hear all about the project, and follow-up meetings are being arranged for those hoping to become involved. Meanwhile - amid several other talks and presentations at local history events - work on the Burford paperback presses on apace, with a variety background material being prepared for the Explore website.

The final word should go to one of our Burford volunteers, writing in the Oxfordshire Buildings Record Newsletter:

'The day was a real treat ... the volunteers left with a sense of having been appreciated for a job well done, but a certain sadness that there would be no more trips to Burford - a town that we have all grown to love'.

really good, but needs more content, so don't stop now!

Somehow Mel's managed another edition of EPE News, having barely recovered from helping to produce such a fine exhibition and event at the Houses of Parliament. Do have a look at the [exhibition online](#).

Date for your diary Learning Forum 2007

The Learning Forum 2007 will take place in London on Thursday 22 November. We are anticipating this year's forum to highlight activity in the counties, with case studies from volunteers and schools. The forum is also an opportunity to find out what we are all up to, share ideas and discuss key elements of the programme.

An EPE-like project in a Devon seaside town

Photochrome, 'Ilfracombe', c.1890



Currently a small section of Devon falls within the remit of the Exmoor EPE project. In 2006 Devon County Council began exploring the possibility of commencing work akin to that associated with EPE projects, including community participation, the production of educational resources and web publication.

In January 2007 work began on a 'Devon's History and Heritage Online' (DHHO) project with a pilot study of **Ilfracombe**. DHHO will be a public web resource containing sources on various aspects of the county's past. This will include the likes of histories, maps, surveys and images, and also commentary on selected places, periods and themes. Devon County Council is funding the project as part of its 'Celebrating Devon's Culture' strategy, utilising expertise in the county's archive repositories and research and ICT work undertaken by the University

of Exeter. It is envisaged that the resource will be used for a wide range of purposes, such as school-based learning, academic research, community activity and family history.

The DHHO website will offer a sense of Ilfracombe's past, reflecting prominent times and themes in its life rather than attempting a fully comprehensive survey of the town's history and heritage. The focus is also on the town and the immediate landscape in which it is placed, rather than the wider civil parish as a whole. A selection of historical sources and corresponding commentary will be included, chosen to help convey that sense of historical Ilfracombe.

For further details contact:

Andrew Jackson
A.J.H.Jackson@exeter.ac.uk

Second EPE schools project complete

Dulverton school pupils on the farm



The Exmoor schools project has been successfully completed.

Hilary Binding acted as Education Consultant with Dulverton Middle School to look at local 1940s farm life and how it has changed.

The project encouraged the use of surveys and maps and field trips at the local farm and was supported in school with follow up ICT work and discussions on what they had learnt. An exhibition was created along with leaflets detailing their findings. An evaluation is currently taking place.

Hardwick study day

The parishes around Hardwick Hall, the subject of one of the two Derbyshire EPE paperbacks, were the focus of a sell-out day school held on Saturday 2 June.

Based at the National Trust's Hardwick Park Visitor Centre, the day combined two talks by Philip Riden, Derbyshire EPE Team Leader, with field visits. Over 40 people attended the event.

The period between the late 16th century, when the estate was first assembled by James Hardwick, and the mid 20th century were studied. During the latter time Hardwick Hall passed to the National Trust and the estate began to be broken up following the death of the 10th duke of Devonshire.

The talks focussed on how the Cavendish family managed the estate, through phases of comparative neglect and development, which affected both landscape and buildings in the villages around Hardwick. The impact of coal mining in the late 19th century was also explored.

The afternoon saw visits to Rowthorne, Ault Hucknall church and Heath, which remained very much an estate village until well into the 20th century.

Philip Riden explains architectural features of Ault Hucknall parish church





Meet the team

Neil Penlington - Administrator

I am a postgraduate history student at the University of London. My main interest is modern British social and gender history and I am currently researching masculinity and domesticity in 1930s South Wales. I am interested in how local history can be used to tell a national story.

I returned to my studies after a career in health service management. In my time with the NHS I worked at three London teaching hospitals in a variety of roles ranging from statistical modelling of HIV/AIDS to performance management and planning.

My role as EPE administrator is very varied and my past experience has been helpful. I generally help out with the administration of the project, including organising meetings and events. I also assist with the updating of website content and supporting Aretha George's work on education and volunteer programmes. This work includes



Neil hard at work!

supporting the structure of some of the schools projects to be delivered in 2008.

EPE is an interesting and exciting project that sits well with my passion to bring history out of the university seminar and into the lives of ordinary people. The project is a good mix of academic and volunteer research and one that helps to bring history alive for schoolchildren. EPE also helps to connect local history with the larger national and international context.

Why I got involved in EPE

I got involved in the England's Past for Everyone project because I believe passionately in the importance of History in the education of young people. It is from History, more than any other subject, that we gain a sense of who we are and of the forces that have shaped the human world around us. In this context, *local* history has a vital role to play.

Being able to study the local impact of major events, like the industrial revolution, using local sites, local sources and local stories makes the history relevant, interesting and concrete. It hooks and engages, and this is vital.

I truly believe that well-researched, carefully designed local history that illuminates national events can make History relevant and interesting to all, and that's why projects like England's Past for Everyone are so important.

John Welham

Education Consultant, Cornwall

Bristol update by Gill James, Volunteer Group Leader



Mosque, Stapleton Road, Bristol

It's been a busy few months for the Bristol EPE team. A draft of the book has now been sent to London and our IT expert, Jane Stone, worked heroically hard to ensure our site was ready in time for the 'Explore' launch.

James Davies, English Heritage, has taken some wonderful photographs for our book and, as a result of his work, English Heritage now has its first multi-faith photographic record of Bristol's religious buildings.

On 24 March the Avon Local History and Archaeology Society held a study day in association with EPE and UWE. Peter Fleming, Bristol Team Leader spoke about the EPE project and the forthcoming book and Jinx Newley, one of Bristol's volunteer researchers, gave a paper based on her research into the Welsh community in Bristol.

In May Peter gave a paper on Icelandic servants in fifteenth century Bristol at a conference organised by the University of Illinois.

Finally, we are pleased to say that the Bristol Record Society has agreed to publish an additional volume next year, related to the Bristol EPE project. It will feature the wide-ranging archival work Andy Foyle has done for Bristol EPE on Bristol's religious buildings and their links with ethnic minority worshippers. Andy edited the latest version of Pevsner's Bristol so we are doubly pleased to have him on board.



Herefordshire launches street gazeteer



Brian Smith brandishing the gazeteer!

On 22 May a new booklet, a gazeteer of Ledbury street names, was launched at a meeting of the Herefordshire VCH Trust.

The booklet is the brainchild of Beryl Rowley and was compiled by her and two other EPE volunteers, Angela Bishop and Gillian Murray.

The booklet describes the origins of every street name in the town, from the earliest, such as The Homend, to the most recent. How many

people know that Churchill Meadow is named after a family of local butchers, or Newton Close after an apple?

At the meeting Dr. Sylvia Pinches, gave an illustrated report on her work on the first Herefordshire EPE paperback; a history of Ledbury from about 1558 to the present day. This book is due to be published in early 2008. She also took the opportunity to thank the volunteers, who have contributed so much to the project.

Mr Brian Smith, announced his retirement from the chair of the Herefordshire Victoria County History Trust. Dr Janet Cooper, succeeding him in the chair, congratulated him on his ten-year stewardship during which the EPE project had begun.

The booklet costs £3.95 and is available from Ledbury bookshops.

First EPE book launched



Codford book launch

At 2pm on Saturday 21 April, Codford Village Hall was full to celebrate the publication of *Codford: Wool and War in Wiltshire*.

The book was officially launched by John Bush, Lord Lieutenant of Wiltshire, and Patron of Wiltshire VCH Appeal Trust. John Chandler, principal author of the book, thanked all those who had helped to produce it, including Carrie Smith, Sally Thomson, Dorothy Treasure and local residents.

The highlight of the afternoon was an illustrated talk by Rex Sawyer. Rex is author of *Little Imber on the Down* and was presented with a British Association for Local History (BALH) Personal Achievement Award in 2006.

Following the presentations visitors were able to browse a local history fair which included stands from local history groups, museums and record societies from across the county, as well as the University of the West of England. There was also a display of work by the children of Wylve Valley School, produced as part of the EPE Wiltshire schools project.

The event received extensive coverage on BBC Radio Wiltshire and Phillimore were delighted by the number of books sold on the day.

The book can be purchased via the EPE website.

Off to pastures new - Andrew Hann, Kent Team Leader



Andrew Hann, Kent Team Leader

After almost two years with EPE I will be leaving at the end of August to take up a new post as Senior Properties Historian at English Heritage (EH).

EH is keen to encourage closer links with local communities, schools and volunteers, and to make their literature more accessible to the

public, so my experience of working for EPE will come in handy.

Working on the Kent project has been immensely enjoyable. As a complete newcomer to Kent I have learnt a lot about the county and its fascinating industrial history.

I would particularly like to thank the hardworking and enthusiastic team of volunteers who have done much of the real research. Their continuing support and genuine interest has made working for EPE a worthwhile and pleasurable experience.

I hope to maintain links with VCH both nationally and in Kent and will follow the fortunes of the EPE programme with interest over the coming years.

Volunteer training in Exmoor by Anne Todd, Volunteer Group Leader

Exmoor volunteers and team members at Luckesses



Before visiting the site of the deserted farmstead at Luckesses volunteers spent a day at the local record office with Team Researcher Spencer Dimmock. The volunteers looked at census records and studied regression maps of the area. This work, combined with evidence already uncovered by the team, revealed that Luckesses, a 32 acre farmstead, was held by John Lucas in 1569. In the early eighteenth century the lease was taken over by a yeoman from neighbouring Twitchen and at the end of the century it was held by

Molland gentry as part of a larger estate. Between 1841 and 1871 it was occupied by farm labourers and in 1881 by a shepherd, reflecting its remoteness. The farmstead was left uninhabited for some years until 1901 when records show John Bond, a 64 year old bootmaker, and his family as living there. It is thought that this family were the last to inhabit Luckesses.

Following the day at the record centre the volunteers visited Luckesses and received on-site training from Rob Wilson-North,

EPE Team Leader and archaeologist for the Exmoor National Park Authority. The volunteers were divided into two groups and took notes on the ruins of the buildings and the earthworks. They also surveyed the area for field systems, green lanes and any other features of interest on the site.

Rob then walked the volunteers round the site and highlighted all the areas that needed recording. The ruins of the four buildings on the site, and a yard containing a spring system and two former ponds which supplied the field gutter system, were all measured and photographed. It was noted that a disused green lane marked the approach to the farmstead's original entrance.

The volunteers enjoyed the day and look forward to making good use of the training when they go off and record desertions on their own.

Volunteer case study: Peter Bishop, Herefordshire

Peter Bishop, Herefordshire volunteer



I am 65 and a retired optometrist. For a long time I have had a general interest in history and particularly enjoy visiting Roman ruins when on holiday. I heard about the EPE project from a friend and thought it would be a good way to learn about history. The group I joined looked at censuses from 1851-1901 in the Records Office. Many of the Victorian documents are written in archaic

handwriting but after much practice I have become skilled in reading them. We have transcribed the census records, entered them onto a computer and will now analyse the data.

I have enjoyed learning new things. My computer skills have really improved and it has been fascinating to learn more about the Victorian era. My science background helped me to bring orderliness and organisation to my own work. It has been a great opportunity to meet some inspirational people and I now have a much better understanding of how history is compiled, interpreted and reinterpreted. I will be sad when the project finishes.

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

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

 Heritage
LOTTERY FUNDED




Institute of Historical
Research