

Bringing local history to life

From the editor

Welcome to the last edition of *EPE News*. Read more about our plans for a revamped newsletter in 'From the Director' (below).

Over the past five years the EPE project has achieved some amazing things and our recent conference was a celebration of all the hard work that has taken place across the country, to engage new audiences with local history. Find out what our Herefordshire volunteer, Pat Strauss, thought of the event and how others are 'bringing local history to life' in their own communities.

Oxfordshire team launches history of Henley

Henley-on-Thames: Town, Trade and River was launched at the River & Rowing Museum in Henley. Over 100 friends and supporters attended, and VCH Director, Professor John Beckett, presented a copy to Tim Stevenson OBE, Lord Lieutenant of Oxfordshire. The Museum was our educational partner in the Oxfordshire EPE schools project, and has created a small exhibition to help publicise the book. This will run until April before transferring to other venues.

Written by Dr Simon Townley, the book tells Henley's story from its origins as a medieval inland port shipping grain to London, through to its modern role as a small tourist and service centre, famous for its annual Royal Regatta. Chapters on the river trade describe the changing

In this issue we are also celebrating the launch of four more paperbacks in Cornwall, Derbyshire, Kent and Oxfordshire; and exciting news of a new VCH project in Hampshire. We have our usual 'Meet the Team' and 'Volunteer Case Study' items, and a reminder of the chance to win Amazon vouchers for your school.

Our website will continue to provide news updates and look out for our 'end of project' report in the spring. If you would like to contribute ideas for our new style newsletter email melanie.hackett@sas.ac.uk

life of the Thames and some of the town's buildings have been firmly dated for the first time, thanks to a programme of tree-ring dating undertaken as part of EPE.

Meanwhile Oxfordshire's earlier EPE book (*Burford: Buildings and People in a Cotswold Town*) has just been reprinted, having sold out within months.



Presenting a copy of the book to the Lord Lieutenant

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Jean Cheshire, Hampshire



From the Director

Professor John Beckett presents a copy of our Cornwall book to artist, Jeremy le Grice



EPE has been a great success but all good things must come to an end – except that in this case we have always had our sights set on the next stage! Sustainability, whether you like the word or not, is the name of the game, and I am delighted to be able to announce that the publishers Phillimore have been so pleased with our paperback series that we have reached agreement in principle to continue beyond the original series of fifteen books. More news will appear on our website as we formalise the new arrangements.

And, if this is, as our editor tells us, the last edition of EPE News, that is only because in Spring 2010 it will merge (seamlessly?) into a quarterly newsletter from the VCH which will be circulated by email to all our staff, volunteers and supporters, to keep them in touch with what we are doing and how we are progressing. Without the HLF funding which has been so critical to our development since 2005, we shall have to operate a little differently, but VCH-News will build upon Mel Hackett's excellent EPE News to provide news (obviously!) and other features reflecting our activities. More news in Spring 2010.

Useful documents

Through our Learning Programme we have developed a number of useful tools to help us with our work. We have now made these freely available from our websites.

Visit the 'Project in Practice' pages on our *Schools Learning Zone* (SLZ) to download our case studies. These documents offer information on project planning, delivery and key recommendations based on correspondence and evaluation gathered during the projects. Other useful documents to help run a

local history school project are the 'Working with Schools' guide and our 'Schools Project Planner', also available from the SLZ (www.EnglandsPastforEveryone.org.uk/schools).

Our 'Volunteer Toolkit' is now available from the EPE national website (www.EnglandsPastForEveryone.org.uk). This free guide is designed to help you set up, market, manage and evaluate your volunteer programmes using best practice.

Finding our roots

Our Somerset Team Leader, Mary Siraut, attended the 'Find Your Roots' event at the Matford Centre, Exeter last month.

The event was aimed at local and family history audiences, with particular focus on south-west based organisations.

Delegates were able to attend short talks, with speakers including local historian Dr Nick Barratt.

The VCH stand at the exhibition



The VCH stand saw a steady flow of visitors throughout the day. Mary spoke to over 100 people about our work, handed out many leaflets and encouraged delegates to sign up to EPE News.

All aboard...Kent book launch

Our Kent paperback was launched on a balmy autumn evening with a delightful river cruise along the Medway on the historic Paddle Steamer, Kingswear Castle.

The event was attended by over 80 guests, including representatives from local funders, University of Greenwich and Kent County Council.

Written by Dr Andrew Hann, 'The Medway Valley: a Kent Landscape Transformed' looks at the history of the area from 1750-1900. It focuses on the impact of the rise and decline of a variety of industries,

Paddle Steamer Kingswear Castle



including shipbuilding, papermaking, brickmaking, cement production and agriculture, on the communities clustered along the Medway.

A second project in Kent is currently underway. Looking at the history of the Medway Towns from 1550-1900, a paperback will be published in 2010.



From the archives: early tourism in west Somerset

The romantic scenery of west Somerset attracted visitors from the late 18th century, notably the poets Coleridge and Wordsworth, who inspired others to visit both west Somerset and the Lake District.

Thomas Ernst married Elizabeth Strachey in 1819. They settled at Batcombe, Somerset, but spent much of their time travelling and kept detailed travel journals. In 1823 they visited the Lake District, stopping at Rydal 'to look at Wordsworth's cottage a little up the hill – pretty situation with a nice walk commanding Wyndermere [sic] and the little lake of Rydal water'.



Rydal Water, Cumbria

In July 1845 the couple set off for west Somerset with two servants. Elizabeth disliked 'the cold Nutshell intended for our week's abode' at Blue Anchor and found 'comfortable apartments & good fare at the Luttrell Arms' in Dunster. They visited the church, finding the screen 'disfigured by brown paint', then drove to Porlock and Culbone visiting Lord Lovelace's house whose grounds were 'in a most forlorn state & quite disgraceful to the natural beauties of the place. Perhaps this is the reason he is very strict in shutting out strangers from his domain.' They decided to spend a few days in Linton visiting the Valley of the Rocks and Combe Martin where they saw 'many ragged & sickly looking children'. They returned via Porlock where Elizabeth thought the landowners should create a 'bathing place with

detached Villas commanding the sea and a fine Crescent almost on the Beach adapting itself to the form of the Bay.' Sir Thomas Acland maintained 100 miles of paths east of the bay and employed a man to mow the grass and maintain the hedges.

They enjoyed their visit so much they repeated it in September visiting Dunster castle, which Elizabeth found 'hardly worth seeing', the furniture 'mediocre', the floors slippery and the building exhibiting 'a sad picture of departed greatness'. They returned to Porlock stopping on the way to walk some of the Acland paths before being invited into the grounds at Holnicote. After visiting Barnstaple and Bideford they returned to Dunster via Dulverton. Elizabeth admired the road 'thro a beautiful valley with fine hanging woods rising to a considerable height' but having lingered at the Rest and Be Thankful alehouse they had to light the carriage lamps for the last couple of miles to Dunster. She arrived back at 'dear Home' 16 days after leaving it.

Further materials relating to the history of Exmoor can be found on our Explore website, along with 1000s of other free local history resources from our EPE projects.
www.ExploreEnglandsPast.org.uk



Dunster Curtain Tower

Seminar series 2009/10

The 2010 Locality and Region seminar series has now been announced.

The seminars are free and open to all. Papers for this year include 'Parks and Communities in Medieval England'; 'The Exmoor planned farmstead'; 'Small Towns and Economic Change'; and 'Church and Community in South London'.

Seminars take place at 5.15pm in the Ecclesiastical Room at the Institute of Historical Research, Senate House, University of London. A full programme can be found on the Victoria County History website www.victoriacountyhistory.ac.uk

Last chance to enter...



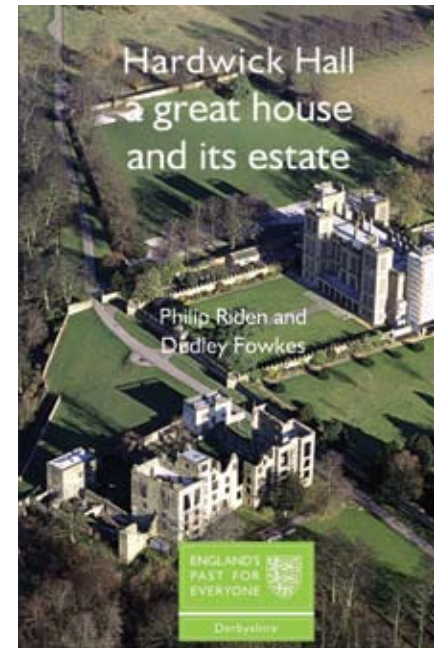
Download our free activity poster from the website

There is still time to enter our school competition and name our team of 'Explorers'. Created by illustrator Shaun Askew, the Explorers guide pupils around our *Schools Learning Zone*. The competition is aimed at 5-14 year olds and four winning entries will receive Amazon vouchers for both pupil and school.

Also available from the *Schools Learning Zone* is a download of our school poster. Distributed through English Heritage's Heritage Learning magazine, the poster includes ideas for activities to encourage pupils to engage with the history around them. Visit www.EnglandsPastforEveryone.org.uk/schools



Hardwick launch



The Hardwick book cover

Over 80 people attended the successful launch of our second Derbyshire book in December.

'*Hardwick Hall: a Great House and its Estate*' was launched in the beautiful surroundings of the Hall, by kind permission of the National Trust.

Written by Philip Riden of Nottingham University and Dudley Fowkes, a retired senior archivist, the book explores the history of both the halls and the wider estate, the changing fortunes of the Cavendish family, and the growth and eventual decline of the coal mining industry in the area.

Guest of honour was the Duke of Devonshire who provided a foreword for the book. Also in attendance were representatives from local funders Derbyshire County Council and the University of Nottingham. Other guests included members of the Derbyshire VCH Trust, loyal supporters of our work in the county.

All of the EPE paperbacks can be purchased from our publisher's website www.phillimore.co.uk

Meet the team

Sarah Byrne: Production Assistant



Sarah in Papua New Guinea

I started working with EPE as Production Assistant in August 2009. My primary role is to assist in the delivery of EPE volumes by checking that all the illustrative material and text is ready for publication. I am currently involved in updating the project website and carrying out evaluation in preparation for the end of the project.

For many years I worked as a field archaeologist in Ireland, England, Australia and the Pacific, as well as documenting ethnographic collections. I recently graduated from University College with a PhD in archaeology, where I researched the stone monuments and rock art on a tiny island off the coast of West New Britain, Papua New Guinea. It was this experience of working with a small rural community that really sealed my belief that communities have a key role to play in how their heritage is written and presented. Even though I joined EPE at its tail end, I have very much enjoyed seeing how successful this project has been, particularly in terms of its professional outputs and wide-spread community involvement.

Newlyn Reelers help launch Cornwall book

The second Cornwall book, '*Cornwall and the Coast: Mousehole and Newlyn*', was launched at Newlyn Primary School with an evening of cider, pasties and country dancing, ably led by local band the Newlyn Reelers.

The celebration was officially opened by Chair of the Cornwall Victoria County History Trust, Lady Banham. Other speakers included author Joanna Mattingly, local artist and author of the book's foreword, Jeremy le Grice and south west representative for the HLF, Hilary Bracegirdle. Professor John Beckett, Director of the Victoria County History, presented copies of the book to a number of guests, including Jeremy le Grice and the headteachers of both Mousehole and Newlyn Primary Schools, who were key partners in our Penwith school project.

Written by Dr Joanna Mattingly, the book explores how the diverging interests of the two towns developed. From the medieval watermills and market place of Mousehole, to controversial slum clearance and the fight to save the fishing fleet in 20th and 21st century Newlyn, the story is told against a backdrop of national concerns. Themed chapters also explore the emergence of Newlyn's artist colony and the centrality of Mousehole and Newlyn to the survival of the Cornish language.



Guests take part in the reels



Conference: Is England's Past for Everyone? Learning and Outreach in the Historic Environment

Baroness Andrews opens the conference



© Sarah Cole

Our project conference took place at Armada House, Bristol on 2-3 October. Over 120 people attended the two-day event, which included presentations, workshops and panel discussions. Keynote speeches were provided by Chair of English Heritage, Baroness Andrews; film maker and author Michael Wood; and Chief Curator of Historic Royal Palaces, Lucy Worsley. The conference included workshops on

running volunteer projects and using historical sources, and delegates also had the opportunity to take a tour of Bristol with author of the Pevsner City Guide, Andy Foyle.

A full report and images from the day can be found on our conference website www.EnglandsPastforEveryone.org.uk/conference

Delegates enjoy the city tour with Andy Foyle



© Sarah Cole

Why I got involved: Pat Strauss, EPE Volunteer

Attending the EPE conference gave me one of the biggest buzzes I have had in a long time. As the first day rolled on, I soon saw how much larger and more important the overall project is than my involvement in the work in Ledbury.

The message 'Bringing local history to life' was ringing through loud and clear and engaging the community was integral to several talks, with some presentations demonstrating how this could be done. Getting volunteers to visit local farmers and record handed-down stories about the buildings and past residents generated a real sense of community involvement. A larger-scale village-wide dig, done on one specified day, using a community hall as a headquarters for starting people off and collecting their finds, and film crews scouring people's back gardens, brought no end of residents into the action. An important

outcome was the change in the local community, initially having only a passive interest, then realising they could be active participants in finding out about their area.

As someone who was very sorry to see the EPE project officially come to an end, and thus wanting to find some way for investigations into Ledbury's local history to continue, ideas gleaned from talks ranging from funding to publishing got scribbled in my notebook. But I was most impressed with a presentation by the Chief Curator of the Historic Royal Palaces who described how, in order to attract families to Hampton Court, visitors are invited to be guests at Henry VIII's wedding to Katherine Parr. History is brought to life in a fresh and interesting way, and a healthy increase in young visitors numbers has proved that the past is for everyone!

Volunteers investigating overgrown bridge



I was delighted to be invited to the EPE Conference to talk about the aims and achievements of the Coventry Historic Environment Project. The project is a partnership between the Archaeology team at Coventry City Council and the local archaeological society, with support from the HLF.

Together we undertake archaeological surveys and encourage volunteer participation, in particular, with those who had no previous experience of practical archaeological techniques. Our aim is to improve the public's awareness of local history and to augment the Council's Historic Environment Record.

Our investigation has revealed intense prehistoric activity with the recovery of a large selection of Mesolithic and Neolithic flint tools including blades, scrapers, cores and waste flakes; two Roman sites, and a variety of medieval landscape features. Our most recent discovery is an intriguing earthwork which is probably a burial mound or a hillfort.

We plan to put on a display about the project in February at The Herbert Museum and Gallery and we are also setting up an oral history project. In the meantime we will be spending the dark winter days indoors processing our finds, washing potsherds with ice-cold fingers.

Eloise Markwick,
Coventry City Council

New VCH project

The Victoria County History is celebrating the official launch of a new project in Hampshire.

Co-ordinated by the University of Winchester, the Hampshire Archives Trust, the County Council and the Hampshire Field Club, the project will initially focus on the history of Basingstoke.

A launch event was attended by over 100 people including Lord Lieutenant, Dame Mary Fagan; and the Mayor of Basingstoke, Councillor Brian Gurden. Guests were able to view the work completed so far, including research compiled by the Hampshire volunteers.

Interestingly, the first Hampshire volume, published in 1900, was also the first of the VCH series. The original county set was 'completed' in 1912, meaning there is still almost 100 years of history to account for.

Volunteer case study Jean Cheshire, Hampshire



In 2006 I graduated with a BA Honours open history degree from the Open University and I had my first article published in the OU History Society journal.

As part of my degree I studied the Advanced Diploma in Local History with the University of Oxford. The course co-ordinator told me about the VCH Hampshire project. Being

SLZ resource brings history of papermaking to life



The papermaking interactive, introduced by our team of 'Explorers'

Our Bristol Diversity Trail and Exmoor, Herefordshire and Kent teacher packs are now available from our free *Schools Learning Zone* (SLZ).

The Bristol Diversity Trail was written by Dr Dean Smart, Senior Lecturer in History and Citizenship Education at UWE, and offers many opportunities for cross-curricular study between History, Citizenship and Geography.

The Exmoor teaching material encourages pupils to learn about hill farming (1940s – 2006) using a variety of sources including oral history; maps; photographs; land surveys and timelines.

The Herefordshire material is based on the following themes: 'Tudor buildings in Ledbury'; 'Discovering the lives of the rich and poor in Tudor Ledbury'; and 'Discovering wills'. This unit was developed by education consultant Carolyn Olney.

The Kent teaching material has been linked to a new interactive animation and quiz for young people, developed by illustrator Shaun Askew. In addition, many new 'Image Explorer' interactives are also available for pupils to use.

To download these free teacher packs and access the interactives, visit our Schools Learning Zone: www.EnglandsPastForEveryone.org.

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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