

FRIENDS OF DEVON'S ARCHIVES NEWSLETTER, SPRING 2014

Welcome to the Spring Newsletter.

My predecessor in the role of Chairman Todd Gray MBE played a major role in campaigning for a new Plymouth archive building and we should all thank him for his efforts in this although neither him nor FoDA was mentioned in the press releases and news broadcasts regarding the proposed new history centre, further information on this later in this newsletter. Also, as noted later, little mention was made of the archives in the announcements and I have to wonder how far down the list of priorities these rest. This is something that we will have to keep a good eye on to ensure that that it does not fall off the bottom of the list, a very good reason for a Plymouth based member to volunteer to be the Plymouth rep on the committee.

The formation of the new South West Heritage Trust, combining the Devon and Somerset archive services continues apace and the intention is the trust will be a fully functioning organisation from October 1. I believe that this is a great move for Devon's archives and we now have to look at how we can support this new organisation. Obviously, one of our major roles will continue to be in assisting in the purchase of archival material for the archives with the emphasis being on the Devon part of our organisation's name. I will be happy to receive your thoughts on how we can raise funds to help this aim.

Sales of the Brunel book have continued to be good and we are now coming to the end of the second print run we commissioned. We will shortly be looking at whether it is feasible to go for a third print run or not.

When I took on the role of temporary Chairman on top of my role as Treasurer I made it plain to the committee that I do not want to continue in the role after the AGM in October. I have been a member of the Friends since its inception way back in 1998 and I wish to see it continue into the future as a proactive supporter of the new Trust. However, and I know others do not agree, I believe unless we get new blood coming forward to join the committee and take on the roles of Chairman and Plymouth representative in particular we will slowly sink into obscurity and have to dissolve. If you do not agree in this I will be interested in your views and ideas on the way forward.

Pete Best
Acting Chairman

Roll of Honour Project

The transcription of the Book of Remembrance is now complete and I would like to thank all those who took part in that part of the project for the time and effort you put in in, whether transcribing a single parish with one name listed or several parishes with hundreds of names. The total number of names transcribed is about 400 short of the total noted in the book itself. At the moment this cannot be explained but hopefully the final check against the original will do just that. A volunteer has now come forward to carry out the arduous task of checking against the original and although this will take some time the project is on course to go live on the web by the beginning of August.

Plymouth and South West Devon representation on the Committee

Now that Peter Towey has moved to Somerset, there is no-one on our committee that lives in the Plymouth area. As the Friends aim to cover the Plymouth and West Devon Record Office as well as the other archives in Devon, the committee would benefit from having someone who lives in the area to contribute to our discussions and decision-making. Are you that person? It does not involve a major commitment - only 4 committee meetings in Exeter a year; besides the AGM. You might be able to combine attending the committee meeting with researching in the Devon Heritage Centre!

It should be stressed that whoever takes on the role will not be expected to, organise the annual Friends' Spring Conference in Plymouth!

"Plymouth in the Great War", the Friends' Spring Conference in Plymouth on 29th March 2014.

This one-day conference, held at the University of Plymouth's Sherwell Centre, was a great success with over a hundred people attending. The speakers included Dr Todd Gray, MBE, on Plymouth's War Memorials; Richard Batten comparing recruitment in Exeter and Plymouth; Anne Corry on votes for women and the war and Cmdr Charles Crichton RN, OBE, on the city and the dockyard. Peter Towey also updated us on the current status of the proposals for the Plymouth History Centre. We would like to thank the speakers, the Devon Family History Society for their support, and the University for allowing us to use the Sherwell Centre with all its modern facilities. Several societies had stands there and there was a good range of books for sale from Keith Stevens and Chris Robinson. What was particularly heartening was that there were a lot of "new" faces attending. And lots of FoDA's leaflets were snapped up!

This was the fourth such conference that Peter Towey had organised and, now that he has emigrated to darkest Somerset, will be the last. It would be a shame if the tradition was not able to continue as an annual event. Is there anyone, or a group of members, out there who would be willing to take it on? Peter Towey would be happy to put you in touch with the University and offer help and advice from his experience as necessary. If you would like to talk to him about it you can e-mail him on peter@towey.me.uk. It is very rewarding.

Peter Towey

Update on the proposed Plymouth History Centre.

Many of you will have heard, on Tuesday, 27th May 2014, the announcement that the Heritage Lottery Fund had agreed to pay £12,873,500.00 towards the cost of Plymouth's proposed new history centre. Plymouth City Council have committed another £5 million over the life of the project and the remainder of the £21 million cost is, we understand, already sewn up.

The archives received only a passing mention in the Council's announcement and there was no mention of the role FoDA, and particularly, Todd Gray, had played in campaigning for the new archive building over the last 15 years! However, the good news is that it is now going to happen. Though the Council chose to emphasise the new facilities for the museum and art gallery, the new Centre will also incorporate the Plymouth and West Devon Record Office, the South West Film and TV Archive, the South West Image Bank and the local studies and reference collection of the Library. The existing Museum and Central Library will be renovated and expanded to the rear, facing Tavistock Place, and St Luke's Church on Tavistock Place will be turned into a major exhibition space. Probably, because the former archivist is now part of the Museum staff, there were no quotes from the archives welcoming the decision. People interested in keeping up-to-date with the project should visit Plymouth City Council's *Love our Past* website

The form of the announcement underlines that we must keep the pressure on to ensure that the archives are not forgotten and treated as the poor relations in the development. It is just as necessary as before to have local FoDA members keeping their Councillors and the Museum up to the mark.

The new Centre does not currently have a name but is expected to be open by spring 2019 - in good time for the 400th anniversary of the Mayflower in 2020.

Peter Towey

Crediton Library

The end of January saw FoDA arrange for the Dawson Drawings, contemporary watercolours of the building of Brunel's Atmospheric Railway, to take a journey from the Devon Heritage Centre to Crediton Library. They were well received by visitors and library users, and prompted much conversation about changes in the landscape, and especially why some of the paintings were upside down - children were generally quick with an answer. "Well Grandad that's what you see out of one window of the train, and the upside down bit is what you see out the other window!"

The book, *Brunel's Atmospheric Railway Featuring the contemporary watercolours of William Dawson*,

edited by Paul Garnsworthy and funded by FoDA and the Broad Guage Society is selling very well and is available from most local bookshops and at The Devon Heritage Centre at Great Moor House, Exeter.

Carole Herbert

South West Heritage Trust Update by Tim Wormleighton (Issued 3 June 2014)

Yesterday we hosted a meeting of some key Devon stakeholders with David Gwyther, Chair of the new South West Heritage Trust, and two of his trustees, Angela Harper and Terry Makewell.

David updated the group on progress in forming the dual county (Devon & Somerset) Heritage Trust. The trustees have now been appointed, together with the Chief Executive, Tom Mayberry, who is at present Heritage Services Manager for Somerset County Council. The Trust is currently operating as a shadow board with the intention of operating as a fully functioning organisation from 1 October. It has now been incorporated as a limited company and its next step is to become a registered charity. Articles of Association have been drawn up and the shadow board is in the process of finalising the level of grants to be allocated to the Trust when it takes over responsibility for both counties' heritage services from that date. The respective County Councils will be its main funders; David explained that the level of cut imposed in both Councils' funding agreements will be considerably less than would have been the case if the respective heritage services had remained within direct local authority control. The Trust is developing its own business plan, a summary of which will be promoted at launch events planned to take place at the Houses of Parliament as well as locally in the Autumn.

David told the stakeholder group that his Board of Trustees had been appointed on merit, but acknowledged that this had led to something of an unbalanced representation from Devon. He felt that this might become an issue in Devon and was able to reassure the group that an additional trustee will be appointed shortly, ring-fenced to Devon. He and his trustees are very keen to ensure that any perception that Devon might be viewed as a junior partner within the joint Trust will not be justified.

Discussions are ongoing with regard to the future level of archive provision within Barnstaple Library but a likely model emerging will see the service continuing on a smaller scale within a new Devon Centre approach. Some records such as public records, local authority, parish, tithe and manorial records that are subject to legislation and regulation will be transferred to the Devon Heritage Centre in Exeter as there will no longer be sufficient storage space to retain them in Barnstaple. However, there would be a dedicated digitisation programme to ensure that these records will still be accessible to users of the north Devon facility in digital format.

David is keen to stress that all existing agreements and contracts will be honoured by the Trust in the immediate future in order that levels of service can be maintained as much as possible. He would prefer all change to be gradual.

A major initiative that the Chair explained he is keen to introduce is the establishment of an Advisory Forum, comprising people drawn from local organisations and other users across the two counties to act as a 'critical friend' of the Trust to review changes and advise on possible outcomes and opportunities.

The Chair of the South West Heritage Trust demonstrated yesterday that he is a lively and approachable person with loads of enthusiasm and plenty of ideas and he will be an excellent figurehead for the new organisation. He is also a very good listener and I am sure that he made plenty of written and mental notes as a result of the many insightful and constructive comments contributed by those attending the Devon meeting.

To keep up to date with developments as the South West Heritage Trust comes into being, please visit the respective websites of the Devon and the Somerset Heritage Services.

Tim Wormleighton, Heritage Services Manager, Devon Heritage Centre

FoDA 2014 Conference: Crime and Punishment

This year's FODA Conference will feature a number of speakers on the theme of crime and punishment.

These will include Dr John Booker (volunteer at the Devon Heritage Centre and formerly Deputy County Archivist at Essex Record Office and Chief Archivist at Lloyds Bank), who is currently working on cataloguing the county's Quarter Sessions records. Devon has the longest, unbroken run of such records for any county record office in England, and John will be talking about both the work involved in cataloguing them and the stories they reveal.

Also speaking is Angela Sutton-Vane, curator at the Devon & Cornwall Constabulary Heritage & Learning Resource, who has been awarded a scholarship for doctoral research at the Open University's International Centre for the History of Crime, Policing and Justice. Angela's talk will therefore revolve around her PhD research and the challenges for custodians of police records, as well as their potential for researchers.

And David Hawkings, author of several genealogical publications including *Criminal Ancestors* and *Bound for Australia*, will speak on penal transportation to Australia, with his talk including a Westcountry example as a case study.

When: Monday 20 October 2014 (note change from usual day, not on a Saturday this year)

What time: 9.30am-4.30pm (AGM from 10.00-11.00)

Where: Devon Heritage Centre (see address below)

How much: £18 members, £23 non-members (includes lunch and tea/coffee)

How to book: Please send cheque and booking form to Stuart Tyler, FoDA Secretary, Devon Heritage Centre, Great Moor House, Sowton Industrial Estate, Exeter EX2 7NL, or email stuart.tyler@devon.gov.uk. Bookings/payment should be received by 6 October 2014 to confirm your place.

Preservation work at the Devon Heritage Centre

FoDA is assisting preservation work at the Devon Heritage Centre by funding a special order of packaging materials from Preservation Equipment Limited.

Two large collections, the Stone collection (deposited last year, an extensive archive of photographs collected by a former Exeter librarian) and the Herbert Read collection (architectural plans, mostly of churches) are subject to ongoing work by staff and volunteers, but their size, format and importance means they require additional packaging materials to ensure they are both accessible to current researchers and preserved for future ones.

The order consists of Melinex (archival polyester) sheets, which are essentially turned into see-through envelopes of various sizes in which the individual photographs or plans are placed, will allow researchers to safely and easily handle the items.

Sue Jackson

FoDA Newsletter Editor, June 2014.

This newsletter is produced by the Friends of Devon's Archives, c/o Devon Heritage Centre, Great Moor House, Bittern Road, Sowton, Exeter EX2 7NL.

www.foda.org.uk

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FORM**

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Name(s)

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Contact telephone:

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Bookings should be received by 6 October 2014 to guarantee your place.

Lunch plus morning and afternoon coffee/tea is included.

For information on getting to the Devon Heritage Centre, see:

www.devon.gov.uk/index/councildemocracy/record_office/record_offices_in_devon/visiting_us.htm

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