

Somerset Snippets

The Newsletter of the Friends of Somerset Archives

Issue 8

January 2007

From the Editor

Dear Father Christmas,

Please place the following in my stocking. Baptism records for Kingsbury Episcopi for 1770 showing Edmund Brister's parents, six bastardy awards for Shepton Mallet in the eighteen forties naming the fathers of Rebecca Brister's children and some early deeds giving details of Wheelwright's Cottage in High Ham – I wish! The Christmas season will pass very quickly and we will be making New Year resolutions for 2007 some of which will be about renewing our researching and most of which most we won't keep. How about making a resolution to introduce a new member to the Friends of Somerset Archives?

Beside the usual information this letter includes an end of year report on the financial status of the "Friends" and an article from Pat Hase about alternative Somerset archives. Please keep your articles and feedback coming.

In the meantime the Friends of Somerset Archives Committee wish you the Merriest of Christmas and a wonderful 2007.

CHANGE OF LOCATION

The New Year Social and A.G.M.

Please note that due to storm damage to Anne and Robin's house the A.G.M. will be held at Wilton Village Hall Saturday January 13th at 7.30pm. Directions are inside.

Apart from not having the wonderful surroundings of Chilliswood everything else will be just as enjoyable, including the quiz which I know Esther and Jane are busy preparing.

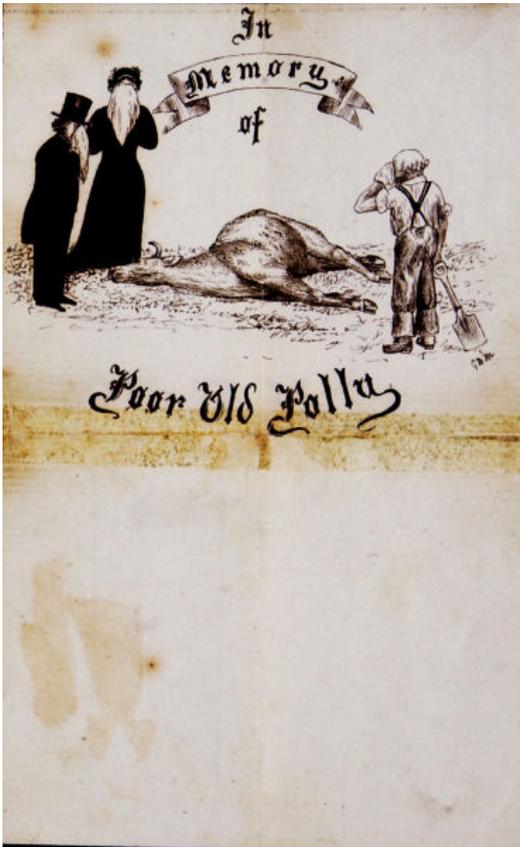
MEMBERSHIP

If you do not pay by standing order there will be a membership form enclosed with this Newsletter and once again we implore everyone to rejoin as your membership is valued very highly and every one of you is important.

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

When the "Friends of Somerset Archives" was founded it was agreed that the committee members should only serve for three years and next year (2008) we will need new committee members. In order for continuity it would be unwise for everyone on the committee to retire at once so some will do a further year, but at least half will retire at the end of 2007 and new faces are needed to take their place. By doing this fresh ideas will be introduced and every member of the committee will know that they are not in a never ending commitment. If you are interested in becoming a committee member please contact any member of the committee.

A Somerset Document
Poor Old Polly (A\CGF/1)
By
Esther Ormerod



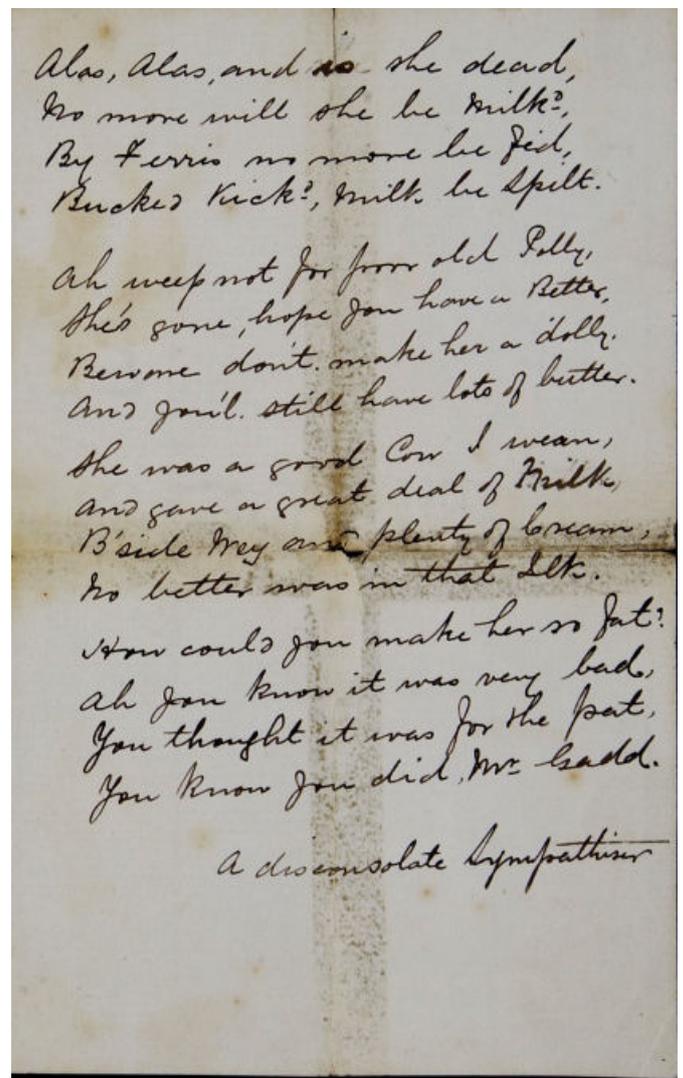
In February 2004 the Somerset Record Office received an account book as a gift. The book was small – approximately 18cm by 12cm, and about 4cm thick. Closer inspection revealed that it was an account book of Henry Hall Foster, who was involved with several types of business including money holding and insurance, and who was also prominent as a landlord. The book covers the period 1853–1885.

Unfortunately there is little information about Henry Hall Foster in the account book but it is possible to piece a little together from various entries. There is a notice of the auction of goods belonging to a Mr H Foster on his retiring from business in 1849. This could be the father of Henry Hall Foster. The lots auctioned included livestock and implements from Priory and Lambrook farms in Taunton. Two of the key names in the account book are those of Lord Portman of Orchard Portman and Sir John Slade of Maunsel. Both owned extensive lands in Somerset, not least in the area around Taunton. A search of our catalogues reveals only one other document mentioning a Henry Hall Foster. The

document is dated 1868 and describes Foster as being of North Petherton.

It is impossible to be certain just from the above information whether Henry Hall Foster who completed the account book was the same person who lived in North Petherton in 1868, and whether he was the son of Mr H Foster who sold property in 1849. Further research would allow a more complete picture to be created, incorporating clues from the account book itself. The account book, like so many documents in the Somerset Record Office, does not yield its meaning all at once. But almost certainly it has a complex story to tell about Somerset people and places.

Perhaps the best thing about the account book was the sheet of paper contained loose inside it. Although the sheet had been stuck together with sticky tape, which had to be removed leaving nasty yellow marks – don't do it! – it included this lovely satirical poem and pen drawing. Not much more to say really except enjoy! And can you tell us more about Henry Hall Foster?



Alas, Alas, and so she dead,
 No more will she be milk?
 By Ferris no more be fed,
 Bucked kick?, milk be spilt.

Ah weep not for poor old Polly,
 She's gone, hope you have a better,
 Besome don't make her a dolly,
 And you'll still have lots of butter.

She was a good Cow I wean,
 and gave a great deal of Milk,
 Beside they are plenty of cream,
 No better was in that ilk.

How could you make her so fat?
 Ah you know it was very bad,
 You thought it was for the fat,
 You know you did, Mr. Gadd.

A disconsolate Sympathiser

Alternative Archives
Somerset Archives - North Somerset Studies Library, The Boulevard, Weston-s-Mare.
By Pat Hase

Anyone looking for information about North Somerset (which for the purposes of this library also includes Chew Magna) should find their way to Weston-super-Mare.

(<http://www.n-somerset.gov.uk/Leisure/Libraries/Informationservices/localstudies.htm>)

When Frederick Augustus Wood died in 1904 he left his collection of books to Weston-super-Mare to form the basis of the Reference Section of the new Library being built there. He bequeathed over 6,500 books together with £1000 to maintain them. He had signed an indenture in 1897 promising to donate the books on his death and in 1899 he laid the foundation stone that reads:

A Memorial of the 60th year of the Reign of Her Majesty Queen Victoria
This stone was laid by Frederick A Wood, Esq., of Chew Magna
August 1st 1899

A portrait of him hangs in the stairwell today and some of his surviving books are still to be found in the North Somerset Studies Library which is housed in a separate room off the main Reference Section of the library. His bequest included a large collection of information about Chew Magna and District including his own handwritten and indexed transcriptions of parish registers, his scrapbooks, Pictures of Somerset Churches and a collection of original Auction Details for properties in the area amongst other items.

Access to this room is available by showing your library card or other means of identification and once inside you find a vast amount of local information.

Other private collections are also to be found:

- Ernest Baker 1854-1931, also donated scrap books and published the results of his investigations into early Weston with interviews of old residents in the 1880s and extracts from Churchwardens' and Overseers' Accounts and other old documents.
- Wilfred Roe who was prominent in the local theatrical scene kept Scrap Books of his productions right up to the 1960s and these are a fascinating insight into entertainment in Weston-super-Mare.
- Brian Austin has also donated the results of many years family and local history research which can be invaluable in finding a lost individual, whether in Weston Cemetery, family trees or in the Magistrates Court etc.

One of the major assets in the North Somerset Studies Library is microfilm of the Weston Mercury going back to 1855, the Weston Gazette 1845 to 1951 and the Clevedon Mercury. The only problem being the addictive nature of newspapers with always something just as interesting in the next column!

These are just a few of the items housed in the North Somerset Studies Library which also has its own collection of cuttings and images of various local topics, all the census and parish records for North Somerset up to about 1900 (sometimes later) as well as the standard printed reference books for the area and is well worth a visit. An index can be searched online <http://www.librarieswest.org.uk/>

If contemplating a visit to the library you should be aware that there is a complementary collection of local material at the North Somerset Museum in Burlington Street, Weston-super-Mare.

(<http://www.n-somerset.gov.uk/Leisure/Museum/>)

Getting to Know You – Anne Leamon – our Chairman

What led you to become interested in the Archives?

Uncovering original plank and muntin screen in the hall of our house which was said to be Victorian. This screen is actually original to the house, dated 1590s.

Tell us about your past history, where you grew up, education, family, career, meeting Robin.

I grew up on a farm in Taunton Deane with four brothers; was educated at the local village school and then went to Weirfield School in Taunton.

I worked mainly in local government and then as PA to a local businessman.

I met Robin one Boxing Day, playing in the annual mixed hockey for the Penguins (Local government team) against the Civil Service. He was on the opposing side to me, marking me.

When we moved to our house, I started a plant nursery which I ran for some 27 years.

I have two daughters and one son, all grown up.



Who has most inspired you during your life?

My mother and my grandmother, both very strong women. Their favourite saying was ‘Time never comes twice my child’ and I have tried to live up to this maxim through my life.

What achievement are you most proud of?

Achieving my HND in Antique Furniture and Ceramic Restoration and Valuation.

What are your interests?

Gardening, history/researching house history, and writing.

What has been your most exciting discovery in the archives so far?

The mention of our house right back through the Winchester Pipe Rolls to the 1200s.

What documentary information would you most like to find?

An inventory for our house.

For what – or how would you most like to be remembered?

Somebody who, no matter how busy she was, would always be willing to lend a hand or listen.

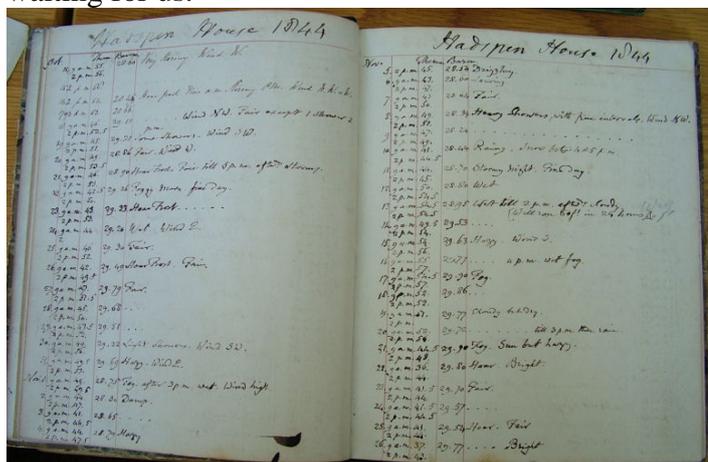
What document would you like archivists of the future to find when researching your life?

To be honest, I can’t think of anything momentous in my life at the moment, in which anybody would be interested!

For those who are disappointed at not being at Anne and Robin’s fine house for the A.G.M., do not worry as we will be visiting there during our September event at Trull

Visit to the Devon Record Office

On the 7th October 2006 seventeen of us arrived at Exeter for what was an eagerly anticipated view of behind the scenes of Britain's newest record office. We were met at the office by the County Archivist, who pointed us in the right direction for the meeting room and cups of coffee that were waiting for us.



A Hobhouse Journal

Our first speaker was Mr. Ian McGregor who gave us a talk on the meteorological records held at the Record Office. He started by giving us a brief history, telling us that whilst Robert FitzRoy is famous for being the captain of the "The Beagle", the ship that Charles Darwin sailed in, it is not commonly known that he was a pioneering meteorologist who made accurate weather forecasting a reality. As early as 1861 weather forecasts were printed in newspapers although after the suicide of FitzRoy in 1865 the weather warnings and forecasts were suspended.



The Strong Room

These were later re-established and in 1870 the first Met Office with a library was opened.

Passers-by could find what the weather forecast was by looking at the balcony of the building where this was displayed. In 1962 it moved to Bracknell and then eventually to its present location at Exeter in 2003.



The Fire Extinguisher

A few of the types of records that are available are, daily weather reports from 1860 to the present day, plotted charts since 1867, the chart for D-Day including observations taken on the beach, weather records for individual places from the 19th century and a number of private diaries dating from the 18th century.

There are a quite a few records relating to Somerset included weather diaries that were kept by the Hobhouse family of Castle Cary between 1828 and 1854 and Clark family of Street between 1857 and 1907. In addition information relating to Bath, Crewkerne, Downside Abbey, Weston-super-Mare, Bath and RNAS Yeovilton is also available.

Ian also gave information about modern forecasting including their computer which has 128 processors that can carry out a mind boggling sixteen billion calculations per second for each processor. The whole of this talk was interesting and informative with many new avenues of research being opened up to us, both in local and family history.

We then broke for lunch, some had sandwiches in the record office refreshment area, whilst others made their way to the Barn Owl and had a very nice meal there.



The Search Room

At around half past one we met John Draisey, the County Archivist, and started our tour of the Record Office. He had found some documents that were relevant to Somerset explained how these came to be deposited there. We then moved into the strong room and were shown how the temperature and humidity were controlled along with some of the problems that had to be overcome. This included the company that was building and installing the mobile storage going bankrupt! We were shown the impressive fire precautions and the “fire extinguisher” which basically appeared to suck the air from the room on fire but left enough for a person to breathe if they were trapped. This was very impressive but I would not like to be the one

to try its efficiency. The conservation area was also very impressive with, what we were told was, the state of the art equipment. Whilst they do not carry out private conservation, they do work for other records offices and have more than enough to keep their three full-time and three “volunteer” conservators busy.



The Conservation Room

The tour finished with members of the party looking at the various indexes and catalogues. The general feeling was that whilst it took seven years from when the building was first found to when it opened the wait was well worth while.

Friends of Somerset Archives Accounts Year Ending November 2006

Income:	Membership	Bankers Orders	£290.00	
		Cheques	£376.00	
		Cash	<u>£ 56.00</u>	
		Total Membership	£722.00	
	CD's sold		£ 8.00	
	Donations		<u>£ 26.00</u>	
			£756	Total Income
Expenditure	Newsletters and Postage		£518.31	
	Printer (B. Welchman)		£150.00	
	Chairman's Expenses		£140.48	
	Hire of Room at Fyne Court		<u>£ 35.00</u>	
			£843.79	Total Expenditure
Bank Balance – Lloyds	Current Account		£214.81	
	Savings Account		<u>£1172.24</u> (includes £6.40 interest)	
			<u>£1387.05</u>	Total Bank Balance.

Events for 2007

January 13th 2007 - Saturday

AGM, Quiz and Social Gathering

Venue: Wilton Village Hall
Time: 7.30 pm

A Walk Around Trull with Tom Mayberry

Venue: to be announced - finishing at
Chilliswood
Time: 10.30 am

March 21st 2007 - Wednesday

Oral Archives with Ann Heeley

Venue: Rural Life Museum, Glastonbury
Time: 7.30 pm

October 31st 2007 - Wednesday

The Shadow of the Workhouse by Pat Hase

Venue: Somerset Record Office
Time: 7.30 pm

May 15th 2007 - Tuesday

The Bridgwater and Taunton Canal by Tony Haskell

Venue: Somerset Record Office
Time: 7.30 pm

December 5th 2007 - Wednesday

Exploring Non-Conformist Somerset With Esther Ormerod and Talya Bagwell

Venue: Somerset Record Office
Time: 7.30 pm

July - To be Announced

September 8th 2007 - Saturday

Directions to Wilton Village Hall

Directions to Wilton Church Hall, Fons George Road, Taunton from M5 motorway

Leave motorway at Taunton Junction 25 and proceed towards Taunton along **Tone Way**.

At the 3rd roundabout take the 1st exit heading towards Exeter. **Critchard Way**

At the next set of traffic lights continue straight on into **East Reach**

At the 4th set of traffic lights turn left still heading towards Exeter. **Hurdle Way, Mary Street**

Upper High Street. After 3 sets of traffic lights just past the Police Station turn sharp left. – Burton Place

Middleway - Continue up the hill to the pub and turn sharp left into the road beside the Pub – **Fons George Road**.

The hall is up a drive on the left just before the Church.

Cars can be parked here or in the public car park past the Church.

If you have the internet pictorial directions can be seen on Yell.com

New Accessions

Parish records and transcripts

Brigwater St. Mary: transcript of baptisms 1557-1646 (D\P\bw.m/2/1/1)

Milborne Port: large deposit, including early registers and churchwardens' accounts, 1538-1966

North Curry: CD-ROM of churchyard memorials for the parish, 2006

Additional parish records for Rimpleton (1820s-1990s), Selworthy (19th-20th centuries), Taunton St. Mary (1954-1994) and Wraxall (1972-2003).

Catholic and nonconformist records

Castle Cary Methodist Church: photographs taken before and after a major refurbishment programme, 2005-2006

Larkhill Christian Centre: marriage register, 1994-2000

Three deeds relating to the Quaker burial ground at Butcombe, 1671-1708

Local government records

Burnham on Sea Urban District Council surveyors' report book, 1928-1931, and Weston super Mare sanatorium receipts, 1870s-1880s

Crewkerne Town Council minutes, 1974-1999

Electoral registers for Woodspring District Council, 1974-1989

Correspondence and papers relating to the "Back to Somerset" campaign, 1987-2004

Rodney Stoke Parish Council records, 1896-1993

Sedgemoor District Council minutes, 1973-2003

School records

Cheddar Handicraft Centre log book, 1928-1962

Records of Frome Community College, 1950s-1980s

Somerset College of Arts and Technology prospectuses, 2000-2005

OFSTED independent school inspection reports for Somerset, 1937-1974

Wincanton Primary School log book, 1912-1950

Clubs and societies' records

Additional records of the Taunton Business and Professional Women's Club, 1965-2003

Display boards relating to the 24th Weston super Mare Hill Road Scouts, 1940s-1990s

Records of the Somerset County Club, 1880-1986

Records of Taunton Court Leet, 1952-2004

Minutes of the Wellington Probus Club, 1976-2004

Records of the Portishead branch of the British Red Cross, 1911-2001

Military records

Additional records of the Somerset Light Infantry, 1815-1962

Charity records

Papers relating to discontinued charities in West and Middle Chinnock, 1885-2000

Records of the Taunton Town Mission, 1928-2004

Records of the Scott-Gould Charity (Somerton), 1872-2002

Other records

14 printed children's books, 1826-1864

Published diaries of Rachel Mary Stephens, née Hulbert, with a book by her widower about her life, [1946]-1998

Additional estate papers for Newton Surmaville, 1900s-1960s

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