

Newsletter

No. 13

October 2013

Welcome to the thirteenth CCHT e-newsletter intended to keep you up-to-date with the VCH Cumbria project.

WEBSITE UPGRADE

Significant improvements have recently been made to the CCHT website, for which the Trust has received a grant of £2000 from Lancaster University. The website is now capable of receiving large quantities of new material - both place-specific and in relation to county-wide subjects. The changes are also aimed to make the website more accessible, with a new search engine to help you find what you are looking for more quickly. The growing importance of the website as a repository for information on Cumbrian history is clearly reflected by the large increase in the number of unique visitors to the site: from 563 in October 2012, rising to 1,611 by September 2013.



In order to improve the pages for individual places, we would like members and volunteers to send in place-specific images or photographs for us to upload to the website. Please note that the images must be your copyright. They can be submitted via email to s.rose2@lancaster.ac.uk

Volunteer Training

The trust's report to the RDPE, covering the support given for volunteer training, has been approved. This brings to an end the external funding for training. Dr Rose's drop-in sessions at Carlisle and Kendal will continue, and the trust will be looking at other ways of sustaining more generic training. Almost all of the volunteer evaluation responses have indicated a high level of satisfaction with what has been provided so far, and it would be particularly helpful to have your suggestions for what you would like to see provided in the future, either to the undersigned, or to Dr Rose who will pass them on.

Marion McClintock m.mcclintock@lancaster.ac.uk

Local History

Surgeries

Sarah Rose will be available in the Kendal or Carlisle Archive Centre on the following Thursdays should you wish to speak to her about your research.

Carlisle Archives Centre:

10th & 24th October

7th & 21st November

Kendal Archives Centre:

17th & 31st October

14th & 18th November

Dates for your Diary

Wednesday 16th October, Lancaster University: James Arnold will be giving a seminar on Photographic collections at the Museum of Lakeland Life and Industry. This seminar is part of the Department of History's new seminar series on local and regional history. The seminar will take place in FASS Building, Meeting Room 2/3 from 5 p.m. Entry is free and all are welcome.

19th & 20th October, Yew Tree Hall, High Lorton: 'A History of our Area in 20 Objects.' This **free** exhibition celebrates the 20th anniversary of the Lorton and Derwentfells Local History Society. Exhibition opens 10 am to 4pm. All are welcome.

Drafting Progress

A drafters' meeting was held at Penrith on 29th August, attended by 14 of our volunteer researchers. There are now three full draft township/parish histories on the CCHT website (Mosser, Renwick and Skelsmergh), and two further interim drafts (Kirkby Lonsdale and Kirkandrews on Esk). We also have a further 27 articles assigned volunteers, all at various stages of progress.

Special Report: Keele Latin and Palaeography Summer School 2013

Attended by Lyn Cole (VCH Askham) and Jane Penman (VCH Martindale)

This is a well-established Summer School that has been running for 35 years. Keele has a strong History department and a dedicated centre for Local History that has close links with the VCH. Many students seem to return to the Summer School year after year. Lyn and I were new to it, and almost new to the study of palaeography, since our experience consisted of little more than the sessions provided earlier this year by the CCHT under the tuition of Sarah Rose. These had been an invaluable introduction to the subject, but there had been time only to study documents from the 17th to 19th centuries written in secretary hand, all of them in English. At Keele we were faced with the rather different challenge of medieval writing, most of it in Latin.

Four courses were offered. One was an introduction to Medieval Latin, another focused on Medieval Accounting Records. Lyn followed the course 'An Introduction to Medieval Documents'. I chose the course on 'Medieval Forests', since Martindale, my VCH township, has an ancient deer forest and I thought I would benefit from an understanding of forest law. I hoped that my knowledge of classical Latin would serve me in reading the texts and compensate for my ignorance of palaeography. Both expectations were more or less fulfilled, though it was a steep learning curve. Medieval Latin is far simpler than its classical ancestor, and the abbreviations and formulae did become familiar. The forests we studied were royal forests, unlike Martindale forest which is a private forest within a manor, nevertheless there was much general information that I thought would be transferable. The hardest element was decipherment of letter forms, because these changed in each document according to the idiosyncracies of the writer, also parts of some documents were almost too damaged or faint (especially in photocopy) to read at all. What was wonderfully rewarding was the content. Six royal forests came into consideration: Kinver, Lancaster, Needwood, Inglewood, Wirral and Macclesfield. We looked at several types of document: records of two Forest Eyres, including the Regards of Allerdale and of Inglewood; the accounts of receivers and the account of a master forester; court cases concerning the lawing of dogs, the seizure of beasts, pleas of venison and a claim by the mayor and burgesses of Lancaster. My tutor, Paul Booth, provided explanation of both the context and the detail of this material and after five days of intensive study I felt transported to the world of the 13th century, with its hunting and fishponds and forges, assarts, agistments and perprestures, and its over-arching theme of the monarch's need to raise money from forest taxes to finance prestige foreign ventures.

This was certainly not a course for the faint-hearted, and my group, with only six students, was the smallest of the four. We were in class five hours a day and dinner was followed by a formal evening lecture. Lecture topics included the last days of Edward I, the Goths, the mistress of Edward III, the Knights Templar, and King Athelstan – fascinating subjects, with excellent speakers. However, preparation and private study could start only after 9 p.m. The level of concentration required in class and the effort overall was considerable. Walks in the grounds offered some moments of respite, since the university campus is organised around an old estate with landscaped lakes and many mature trees, making it a pleasant environment, with the M6 only a distant hum. (Keele's Chancellor is Jonathon Porritt and the university has a commitment to green issues.) The cost was £650 for a five day residential course – a fair sum, but a serious learner might consider it an investment.

Jane Penman

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I (Lyn) also benefited enormously from the week and enjoyed the complete change from everyday life, both in environment and activity. I would echo Jane's comments on the amount of work involved, but the effort put in and the learning gained led to considerable satisfaction, and a feeling of a week well spent. It was not all work, however, and getting to know fellow students with a range of previous experience, and with varying reasons for attending, added an enjoyable social element and the chance to meet other people engaged in historical research.

The 'Introduction to Medieval Documents' course focused mainly on manorial documents, many concerned with property and disputes. These provided a fascinating insight into medieval life, as well as a chance to improve palaeographic skills. The course required a less extensive knowledge of Latin than the one on medieval forests, but it became clear that a better grasp of the language than I possessed would have made things easier. With the addition of the palaeography element it was certainly a challenge. We were straight into transcribing and translating from the beginning of the course which was a little scary, though the tutor soon worked out each person's abilities and provided appropriate support. While it stretched the brain, it was very satisfying when a difficult phrase suddenly made sense, and as the week went on we all made huge progress. For those with no knowledge of Latin there was a beginners' course which used transcriptions of documents.

I would certainly recommend the Keele Latin and Palaeography Summer School. The week was well organised and, although expensive, it was packed full of useful learning, set in a pleasant environment, and a very worthwhile experience.

Lyn Cole

FOCAS – An Invitation



FOCAS (Friends of the Cumbria Archive service) is one of the bodies which have supported the VCH

project since it started, and it is represented on the Board of Trustees.

The organisation was set up in 1991 to lend financial and moral support to the archive service at a difficult time, and over the years we have done so in many ways, from helping to purchase manuscripts which have come on the market to buying new equipment for the record centres, from conservation material to coffee machines. One of the valuable acquisitions which we helped to buy was Lady Anne Clifford's *Great Books of Recorde*, and most recently we gave a grant towards the production of Anne Rowe's impressive and very attractive annual report on the archive service.

Many FOCAS members are personally involved with the VCH. Some are now at work drafting parish and township histories; others have compiled one or more of the Jubilee Digests which are on our website.

All of us will have made extensive use in our research of the records housed in our four county archive centres. We invite those who are not members of FOCAS to consider whether they would like to show in a tangible way their appreciation of the excellence of these resources, and of the help given to them by the archivists, by joining FOCAS as new individual members? We would give them a warm welcome!

The activities of FOCAS are not confined to giving help to the archive centres. We hold regular meetings for members, with guest lecturers, in various parts of the county. At our AGM in Carlisle this month Anne Rowe and Tom Robson, one of her colleagues, showed us some fascinating records which they had found in the county's archives, and then two members reported on their very interesting current research. We also have an excellent illustrated Newsletter, recording *inter alia* what is happening in the four archive service centres.

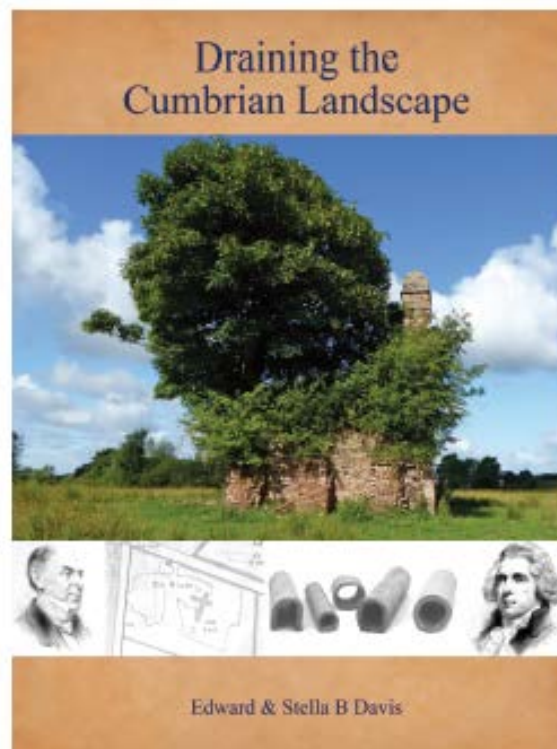
If you would like to join FOCAS please get in touch with Mrs Lorna Mullett, our Hon. Treasurer and Membership Secretary (email: wastwater@talktalk.net). The basic subscription is only £10 p.a.

Mary Wane

Vice-President of FOCAS

VCH Volunteers Publish New Book

VCH volunteers, Edward and Stella Davis have a new book entitled *Draining the Cumbrian Landscape*. Soon to be published by CWAAS, the book is accompanied by a CD containing a 243 page *Gazetteer* of all sites of brick & tile-works, given in parish order. VCH volunteers and CCHT members will be able to purchase a copy using the flyer attached to this Newsletter at the discounted price of £15 (the same price as CWAAS members) rather than the full price of £18.



Cumberland Directory 1954

VCH researchers working on twentieth century history may find useful the 1954 *Cumberland Directory*, published by County Publicity LTD, Carlisle. It includes directories for the following towns:

Aspatria	Keswick	Millom	Silloth	Whitehaven
Cockermoth	Maryport	Penrith	Wigton	Workington

There is also a district directory, parish by parish, which includes names only, but does indicate farmers, while p. xliii includes a directory of clubs, associations, Societies, Organisations, etc. Copies are available in Cumbria's Archive Centres.

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