

## **Maritime History**

A large selection of general books and reference material on maritime history is available in the North Devon Local Studies Centre, encompassing subjects such as ports and harbours; shipping and trade; canals; navigation; privateering and smuggling; wreck and rescue; passenger shipping; the Navy; shipbuilding and biographies of seamen.

A useful summary of original and printed material available both locally and nationally can be found in *Sources for a New Maritime History of Devon*, ed. D Starkey (1987).

## **Customs Records**

Shipping registers recording initial registration and changes of ownership of vessels are held for:

- Barnstaple 1824-1987 (ref. 3318)
- Bideford 1786-1987 (ref. 3319)
- Ilfracombe 1824-1837 (merged with Barnstaple in 1837) (ref. 3317)

Registration details include the date and place of building, dimensions, name of master and often the ultimate fate of the vessel. Similar registers of sea fishing boats are held for the ports of Barnstaple, 1903-1988 (ref. B682) and Bideford, 1884-1988 (ref. B683).

A sample set of Devon crew lists, 1863-1914 (general series) and 1884-1914 (fishing vessels) is held in the Devon Heritage Centre, Great Moor House, Bittern Road, Sowton, Exeter O1392 384253. The sample, some 5000 returns, represents a selection of such material transferred to other repositories from The National Archives in the late 1960s. Further crew lists are held at the National Maritime Museum in Greenwich and the Maritime History Research Unit in Newfoundland, in addition to those retained by The National Archives. A card index of the crew lists held at Exeter can be consulted at the Castle Street office. Other Customs records held by the North Devon Record Office include registers of seamen for the ports of Barnstaple, c.1892-1949 (Ref. 3289add) and Appledore, 1935-1964 (ref. B272); copy correspondence and details of seizures for Appledore and Bideford, 19<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup> centuries (ref. B128); wreck books for Appledore, 1919-1982 (Ref. B272).

Microfilm of port books for Barnstaple, 1565-1582, recording the names of vessels, their home port, captain and cargo, is available (ref. 3760add5). The books, held in the The National Archives (Class E190), cover the area from Barnstaple westwards to include all harbours to Hartland. References to Customs houses may be found in the North Devon Record Office subject card index under the heading CUSTOMS AND EXCISE. The Office also holds a photocopy of extracts from the letter books of the Barnstaple Customs House, 1717-1847 (ref. H/20/2).

## **Harbours and Quays**

Records of harbour schemes at Combe Martin (ref. 50/11) and Ilfracombe (ref. 2458 and B10) are held in the North Devon Record Office. References to work on Barnstaple Quay in the eighteenth century will be found in the records of Barnstaple Borough (ref. B1), and there are further references in the subject card index under the headings TRANSPORT: sea and TRANSPORT: river.

## Useful books:

- *Ports and Shipping in the South-West*, ed. H E S Fisher (1971)
- *Devon Harbours*, V C Boyle (1952)
- *Appledore: handmaid of the sea*, J Beara (1976)
- *The Story of Ilfracombe Harbour*, T Green (1943)

## Ships and Trade

The Bideford Borough records include a register of arrivals and departures at Bideford, 1805-1813, giving master's name, port of origin or destination and details of cargo (ref. 2379A/Z8), as well as an account book of Robert Wren for the vessels Sally and Albion, 1761-1815 (ref. 2379A/Z60). The collection also has photographs of Bideford vessels and shipyards and papers concerning the reinstatement of port status in 1928. There is also an account book for the Rhea Sylvia and her various foreign voyages between 1853 and her loss in 1867 (ref. B120add4).

A few documents concerning the extensive trade between Barnstaple and Newfoundland in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries can be found in the Barnstaple Borough collection (ref. B1). Some early merchants' records are held by the North Devon Record Office, including the account book of Benjamin Smale, 1687-1690 (ref. B69/37) and the letter and account books of Arthur Martyn, a London merchant, 1704-1711 (ref. B69/38 & B69add2/1).

The North Devon Athenaeum holds the Kenneally Collection of scrapbooks containing cuttings, photographs and postcards of ships and shipping.

The North Devon Record Office has two collections of maritime charts of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries (ref. B73 and B128), including the north Devon coast, Lundy, the Bristol Channel and various foreign waters.

More recent material includes records of the firms of Clarkes, marine engineers of Braunton (ref. B168) and P K Harris & Sons of Appledore (later Appledore Shipyards) (ref. B354), minutes of the Braunton Shipowners' Mutual Insurance Association, 1946-1959 (ref. B120add/2) and minutes of the British Shipowners' Association, North Devon, 1908-1945 (ref. B151add/51).

## Useful books:

- *The Merchant Schooners*, B Greenhill (1988)
- *Early-Stuart Mariners and Shipping: the maritime surveys of Devon and Cornwall 1619-35*, ed. T Gray (1990)
- *Shipbuilding in North Devon*, G Farr (1976)
- *Transport and Shipowning in the Westcountry*, ed. H E S Fisher (1973)
- *A Living from the Sea: Devon's fishing industry and its fishermen*, ed. M G Dickinson (1987)
- *Out of Appledore: the autobiography of a coasting shipmaster and shipowner*, W J Slade (1959)

## The Navy

Most Navy records are held by The National Archives in London. Records for a number of individual officers in the Navy are held in the North Devon Record Office, viz. papers concerning the careers of members of the Webber family, later 18<sup>th</sup> century (ref. 3704); mess book, letters etc. of J P B Chichester, 1812-1828 (ref. 50/11); journal of Browne Smith, training

as an officer, 1824-1827 (ref. B69/28) and the midshipman's journal of J H A Stucley, 1934-1936 (ref. 4347).

A few sixteenth and seventeenth century documents, together with a list of Barnstaple men enrolled in the Navy in 1795, are held in the Barnstaple Borough collection (ref. B1). Deeds for the Navy Yard in Barnstaple, 1860-1870, form part of the Barnstaple Town Council deposit (ref. 2654).

### Useful books:

- *The Royal Navy*, W L Clowes (1987)
- *Ships of Devon and Cornwall 1652-1942*, V F L Millard (1942)
- *Naval Heritage in the West, A Endacott* (1986-1988)
- *Naval Records for Genealogists*, N A M Rodger (1988)

### Piracy and Shipwrecks

The earliest document in the Office relating to piracy is an account of pirates off Lundy, 1612 (ref. B1). Other references will be found in the Office's subject card index under CRIME: piracy. Notes and drafts for *The Wreck of the Nightingale* by Stanley Thomas, about the notorious freebooter, Thomas Benson, are held in the North Devon Record Office (ref. B114).

References to shipwrecks will be found in the subject card index under SHIPWRECKS. They include records of wrecks at Saunton and Putsborough in the later nineteenth century (ref. 3704). Reports of wrecks will be found in the local newspapers, such as the Sherborne Mercury, North Devon Journal and Bideford Gazette, available on microfilm. A subject index covering the period c.1850-1895 for the North Devon Journal is available on request. The North Devon Record Office holds wreck books for Appledore, 1919-1982 (ref. B272) and a ships' protest book, giving details of wrecks for compensation claims, 1886-1899 (ref. B622).

### Useful books:

- *Devon Shipwrecks*, R Larn (1974)
- *The cruel coast of North Devon*, M Nix (1982)
- *Shipwrecks of the Devon Coast*, R Larn (1996)
- *Shipwreck Index of the British Isles: SW England*, R & B Larn (1995)
- *Braunton Shipwrecks: tales of ships and seamen wrecked on Braunton's beaches, 1850-1900*, B Brock (1999)
- *HMS Weazle, 1782-1799*, B & A Brock (1998)

### Records of Individuals

Wills, title deeds and other records of individual mariners and shipbuilders will be found among the Office's collections. Other associated items include life-saving testimonials (ref. B120) and the rules of the Clovelly Mariners' Union Society, 1823-1838 (ref. B69/41). A particularly attractive document is the grant of arms to John Hawkins, the famous sea-captain of Plymouth, 1565 (ref. B2).

The North Devon Athenaeum has the diary of William Fulford's journey from Bideford to Quebec, 1848, partially transcribed in *Towards Quebec* by Ann Giffard (1981).

### Useful books:

- *Sir Richard Grenville of the Revenge: an Elizabethan hero*, A L Rowse (1937)

- *Captains from Devon: the great Elizabethan seafarers who won the oceans for England*, H H Miller (1985)
- *Hawkins of Plymouth*, J A Williamson (1969)
- *Atlantic Adventurer: John Delbridge of Barnstaple, 1564-1639*, A Grant (1996)
- The Navy List, 1871-1939

## Footnote

The North Devon Maritime Museum, Odun House, Odun Road, Appledore maintains an extensive collection of objects, photographs and reference books relating to the maritime history of the area.

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