

Transport and Communication

Some General Sources

The North Devon Local Studies Centre holds 6 inch and 25 inch to the mile Ordnance Survey maps for the north Devon area from c.1890 onwards; these can be used to trace the past routes of roads and railways or to date roads, railways and canals. Tithe maps of c.1840, held by the North Devon Record Office for most Devon parishes on microfiche, can be used in a similar manner. Tithe maps are also available online at www.devon.gov.uk/tithemaps.htm.

The Local Studies Centre also holds a comprehensive microfilm collection of back issues of north Devon newspapers, dating from the early 19th century. Newspapers may contain references to road building and the opening of new railways and canals, as well as rail and canal company annual reports, proceedings of shareholders' meetings, etc..

The North Devon Record Office holds many photographs dating from the late 19th century. Photographic collections are also held by the North Devon Athenaeum. The Beaford Archive, which is not located in the Local Studies Centre, also holds an extensive collection of old photographs; an index and selection of images is available online at www.beaford-arts.org.uk. Old photographs are a useful source for showing past modes of transport, stations, road repair work, etc..

The records of county, borough and district councils and other local authorities include committee minutes, planning files, correspondence and byelaws relating to most forms of transport. Parish records, including vestry minutes, correspondence and papers concerning church lands may hold references to roads, bridges, canals, railways, etc..

Local estate papers may contain illustrations, plans, surveys, share certificates, leases and title deeds (with references to rights of way), all relevant to the study of transport and communications. Estate papers can also be found among the records of local solicitors, land agents and auctioneers.

A large selection of books on all aspects of the history of transport and communications in north Devon is available in the Local Studies Centre.

Roads

From the 16th century the maintenance and construction of roads was the responsibility of the local parish under the authority of the county or borough Quarter Sessions. Highway boards took over this area of the work of the parish in 1835, until county councils, who took charge of all county roads, were set up in 1888.

Parish records include the accounts of highway surveyors (or waywardens), the parish officers responsible from 1555 to 1835 for the upkeep of local roads and for organising statute labour from among the parishioners. These accounts provide the names of surveyors and labourers as well as details of particular work carried out. Vestry minutes also often contain information on road building and repair, and the organisation of local labour for such schemes.

The North Devon Record Office holds the papers of north Devon borough Quarter Sessions, which may include highway board records as well as presentments at the Quarter Sessions court for badly kept or obstructed rights of way. Other highway board records may be found

among district council papers. The records of district, borough and town councils may include plans, reports, byelaws, enquiry files, etc. referring to local roads. The North Devon Record Office has some Devon County Council departmental records. These include modern Planning Department display boards, with references to roads, car parks, etc. (ref. B289) and Bideford and Hartland road account bank books, 1915-1917 (ref. 1925 O/SR6-7).

Estate papers will often contain references to rights of way, land involved in new road projects and mention of roads in family correspondence.

The Stevenson Balfour Bequest (ref. B246) contains an index to lanes in Georgeham, a Department of the Environment report on road work in Georgeham and a pamphlet on the proposed North Devon Link Road. The Meshaw local history project notes (ref. B221) include references to local roads. Also of interest is a petition against the 1865 Barnstaple Roads Bill (ref. B69add5/1/6).

The North Devon Record Office also holds a collection of Department of Transport papers concerning the planning, consultation and construction of the North Devon Link Road in the 1980s (ref. B425).

Turnpikes

From the late 18th century, private companies called turnpike trusts were set up across the country to oversee the building of certain new roads and their maintenance. These turnpike roads were financed by the sale of shares and the levying of tolls.

The papers of local solicitors may include turnpike share certificates (poll deeds), deeds, notices, copies of turnpike acts and documents concerning the sale of land. Parish records may also contain papers relevant to turnpikes. The Bideford Library Collection (ref. B69) contains various tenders for turnpike improvements. The North Devon Athenaeum holds a large selection of Barnstaple Turnpike Trust records.

Road Vehicles

Documents held at the North Devon Record Office regarding road vehicles (which can be found by checking the subject index under TRANSPORT: roads) include a petrol ration book, 1973 (ref. B246/1/2), a scholar's bus season ticket, 1935 (ref. B106/1) and references to a proposed tramway from Appledore to Westward Ho!, c1870 (ref. 1843A/PX16).

Bridges

Parish records can include various references to both road and railway bridges. The records of borough Quarter Sessions, responsible from the 16th century to the end of the 19th century for local bridges, may also prove useful, as should the papers of borough, town and district councils. The papers of local estates, solicitors and land agents may contain plans, elevations, etc., some pre-dating the tithe surveys mentioned above. The Bideford Bridge Trust (Refs. BBT, 4274, B68) and Barnstaple Bridge Trust (ref. B56) records include bridge wardens' accounts as well as relevant leases, accounts, tenders and minute books. Further material may be located under the section for COMMUNICATIONS: bridges in the subject index.

Canals

Records concerning canals can include reports, engravings, plans and photographs and can be found by checking the Subject Index under COMMUNICATIONS: canals. The North Devon

Record Office holds a selection of material on the Rolle Canal, 19th and 20th centuries (refs. B328/1-4, 2558M/11/4, 2558M/11/19-21).

Rivers

The North Devon Record Office holds the papers of the Taw and Torridge Fishery board, 1909-1950 (ref. FB5/1-4), as well as meteorological reports and rain gauge readings taken by the Devon River Authority in the 1960s & 70s (ref. B4M/Z8). The Barnstaple Castle collection includes papers of the Barnstaple River Committee, 1844-1856 (ref. BC/Vol68).

District, borough and town council records may contain files, plans etc. with relevance to particular rivers, quays or harbours. Parish and parish council records are another possible source. The papers of Bratton Fleming Parish Council, for example, contain copies of byelaws relating to pleasure boating, 1949-1950 (ref. 1507A/PX168-169).

The papers of local estates can include leases, title deeds and other legal papers, many of which may contain references to weirs, fishing rights, proposed dams, etc..

River Transport

The North Devon Record Office holds papers concerning the Appledore-Instow ferry, 1876 (ref. 1843A/PX23), Barnstaple Quay from the 16th century onwards (ref. B1), and the registration of Barnstaple area pleasure boat proprietors, 1955-1959 (ref. 3760add3/22).

Aqueducts and Viaducts

The North Devon Record Office holds an 18th century engraving (ref. B114/27) and papers concerning the laying of the first stone, 1824 (ref. 2558M/11/1921) of the Rolle Canal aqueduct; also a photograph of the Marland Railway viaduct, c.1910 (ref. 2558M/11/4).

Railways

All railway companies opening new lines were required by law to send plans and details of the proposed undertakings to Parliament. The resulting Deposited Plans and associated books of reference consist of maps showing the proposed route of the line and the plots of land it will pass through, and lists with details of each plot. The North Devon Record Office holds some Plans and books of reference, which can be located by checking the subject index under COMMUNICATIONS: rail; a more comprehensive set is held by the Devon Heritage Centre, Great Moor House, Bittern Road, Sowton, Exeter 01392 384253.

The papers of local authorities include plans, files, minutes etc. concerning various aspects of rail transport, including lines, stations and signal boxes. They are also useful for obtaining information on the closure of lines particularly in the 1950s and 1960s. Parish records may contain references to land affected by railway construction.

The records of local estates, solicitors, land agents and auctioneers include leases and title deeds for lands brought by and let to railway companies, petitions concerning Railway Acts, station plans, etc.. Other relevant documents include prospectuses for a number of railway companies nation-wide from the Chichester family papers, 1845-1846 (ref. 50/11/127-132); also a file from Clovelly Court Estate concerning the Bideford, Clovelly and Hartland Light Railway, 1896-1906 (ref. 1021M/E43).

The papers of the North Devon Clay Company, held at the North Devon Record Office, contain a number of legal agreements concerning both the London and South Western Railway

Company and the Torrington and Okehampton Railway Company, 1896-1901 (ref. 3518B/L26-29). The Great Torrington parish records include a Declaration of Trust concerning Canadian railway stock, 1896 (ref. 4014add/35). The North Devon Record Office also holds an advertisement and a letter regarding shares for the Exeter, Teign Valley and Chagford Railway Company, 1899 (ref. B34/3/1-2) as well as correspondence concerning the closure of the Barnstaple-Ilfracombe line, 1968 (ref. B134/1) and the proposed closure of the Exeter-Barnstaple line, 1971-1972 (ref. 2654add4/Box 23).

Locomotives and Rolling Stock

The North Devon Clay Company records contain a valuation of locomotives, etc. at the company's Peters Marland works, 1937 (ref. 3518B/A9) and papers regarding insurance on railway wagons, 1964-1965 (ref. 3518B/A21).

Air Transport

The records of Ilfracombe Urban District Council contain a file on possible local municipal airport sites, 1930-1951 (ref. R2458/C287). Barnstaple Town Council records include material on a proposed airbase, 1939 (ref. 2654A/Box8). Torrington Rural District Council records contain a planning file concerning, *inter alia*, Winkleigh Airfield, 1972-1973 (ref. 2460add3/22).

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Company number: 09053532 Charity Number: 1158791 VAT Registration Number: 197221592