

Farms and Farming

Useful books:

- *English Farming Past and Present*, Lord Ernle (1912)
- *The Old Farm*, Robin Stanes (1990)
- *Dictionary of the Farm*, Rev W L Rham (1844)
- *Victorian Farms*, Roy Brigdon (1986)
- *Labouring Life in the Victorian Countryside*, Pamela Horn (1976)
- *Victorian and Edwardian Farming from Old Photographs*, Edward Hart (1981)
- *Farming: sources for local historians*, Peter Edwards (1991)
- *Journal of a Husbandman*, Ronald Duncan (1944)
- *Devon*, W G Hoskins (1954)
- *Rural Economy of West of England*, William Marshall (1796)
- *General View of the Agriculture of the County of Devon*, Charles Vancouver (1808)
- *Farming and Transport in the South West*, ed. W E Minchinton (1972)
- *A Farm in Creamland*, Charles Garvice (1910)
- *Braunton Farms and Farmers*, S E Ellacott (1981)
- *Huxtable, East Buckland: the story of a north Devon farm and its neighbours*, ed. Barbara Payne (1993)
- *Rural Life: guide to local records*, Peter Edwards (1993)

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Business records

The North Devon Record Office holds the following farm financial accounts: unidentified farms, 1712-1717 (ref. B53M/B1), 1773-1778 (ref. B44Z/1), 1805-1835, Dolton (ref. 834A/PW742), 1941-1946 (ref. B170add/150); George Chugg of West Down, 1859-1879 (ref. P/62); King's Heanton, Marwood, 1940-1949 (ref. B170add/16-17); Holland of Ensis Farm, Harracott, Tawstock, 1967-1979 (ref. B355/1/1-11).

Also held are the records of Reed of Torrington (ref. 3579B), a firm partly of agricultural produce merchants dealing with several north Devon farms and estates; its records include ledgers, day books, specialised and personal accounts, as well as stock books for livestock, meal and manure. The records cover the 19th and 20th centuries.

The records of Squires of Barnstaple, agricultural equipment dealers (ref. B62B) contain customer ledgers, stock books, etc. and broadly run from 1908 to 1981.

Parish records

As parish registers of baptisms from 1813 and marriage registers from 1837 give the occupation of father or husband, these records can provide the names of parish farmers and farm labourers; even prior to these dates, occupations are sometimes listed. Vestry minute books and the records of the overseers of the poor sometimes contain lists of apprentices and apprenticeship indentures placing apprentices with employers; both these sources therefore also give the names of local farmworkers. Parish rate books contain lists of names and associated properties. Tithe accounts may provide information on farm produce, and parish offices were very often filled by the local landowners and farmers.

The records of manors and estates

Manors and rural estates operated as large farms, the owner of the estate leasing or renting out land to tenants who were in turn directly answerable to the estate owner. In the case of medieval manors, the tenants were often required to work part of the year on the lord of the manor's personal demesne land. The accounts of manorial officials ('comptoti') mostly concern agricultural matters; the accounts of the reeve, for example, were put together from details of his own receipts and expenditure as farm manager. Other manorial records, such as court rolls, customals, rentals and surveys include the names of tenants (most of whom would work as farmers or farm labourers) and any service (including farmwork) or produce owed to the lord of the manor. Title deeds and leases may contain descriptions of particular fields and also rights such as common grazing; sale particulars will show the extent of farm's landholdings as well as some description of the type of land involved. The North Devon Record Office subject index in the searchroom includes sections on MANORS and ESTATES.

The records of local authorities

There is an enormous variety of local authority records relevant to the study of farms and farming. District council records, for instance, include planning applications, enquiry files dealing with new roads and rights of way, correspondence and minute books; any of these may contain references to farms and farm buildings. Similarly, parish council records often touch on disputes concerning farms and local rights of way. Local authority records referring to farming include: file on crops, ploughing, etc. on land belonging to Ilfracombe Urban District Council, 1939-1948 (ref. R2458A/C233); circulars and questionnaire to Bratton Fleming Parish Council concerning wartime food production, 1939-1942 (ref. 1507A/PM3). The records of Devon Quarter Sessions, held at the Devon Heritage Centre, Great Moor House, Bittern Road, Sowton, Exeter 01392 384253 include gamekeepers' deputations (licences), 1711-1789. Many gamekeepers were employed by landed estates, others were local farmers.

Tithe maps and apportionments

Tithe maps and apportionments are available on microfilm for the whole of Devon. They were produced around 1840 and contain information on the owners, occupiers, acreage and land use of each plot of land in a given parish. Tithe maps and apportionments are also available online at www.devon.gov.uk/tithemaps.htm.

Trade directories (non-Record Office material)

Arranged into parish sections, county trade directories produced between 1830 and 1939 give the names of local farms and their occupants or owners; some also contain advertisements, some of which refer to farm machinery, etc.. The Local Studies Library holds a selection of Devon directories.

Photographs and illustrations (partly non-Record Office material)

The North Devon Record Office holds many photographs, drawings, etc., which can be located by using the Illustrations card index in the searchroom or the online indexes; the North Devon Athenaeum and the Barnstaple Local Studies Library also hold collections of photographs and drawings etc. The Beaford Archive – not located in the Local Studies Centre – has an extensive collection of photographs, many of which are of a rural nature; an index and some images are available online at: www.beaford-arts.org.uk.

Other records (partly non-Record Office material)

Inventories, wills and other probate records may contain detailed descriptions of farm buildings and equipment. Muster rolls sometimes list the occupations of parish residents; land tax assessments (held on microfilm for 1780-1832) also list landowners and occupiers as well as giving some detail on land held. The census, held for north Devon 1841-1901, and for all of Devon for 1851 and 1881, lists the occupations of each farm's inhabitants. Particular farming records held by the North Devon Record Office include: agreement concerning landholding, including mention of a granary and orchard, Broadhempston, 1547 (ref. 50/11/11/1); reports on agricultural conditions in Bideford, by Coopers, land agents, 1891-1895 (ref. BBT/A3/9); photographs of potato planting in Harracott (ref. PH/6/18), Yacombe Dairy School class (ref. PH/7/6), threshing at Yarnscombe, 1921 (ref. PH/7/7), ploughing at Hartland, 1946 (ref. PH/7/8), corn dollies, 1946 (refs. B246/7/12 & B246add/13). Other documents relating to farming can be found by checking the North Devon Record Office subject card index under AGRICULTURE or the Discovery website at: www.discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk.

Farm Land

Braunton Great Field (partly non-Record Office material)

Braunton Great Field is one of the few surviving examples of the medieval 'strip-farming' system whereby large unhedged areas of land were divided into strips allotted to different farmers. This meant that different farmers could farm various crops on the same 'field'. The **Transactions of the Devonshire Association** are held by the Local Studies Library and contain a number of useful articles on the Great Field. The Record Office holds the following relevant documents: leases, 1631-1856 (ref. 1142B/L11/18-23); maps, mid 19th century (refs. B170/75, 176); sale particulars, 1877 (ref. 3735M/T2); North Devon District Council file, 1982-1985 (ref. 3760add10/15). Other relevant documents can be located using the North Devon Record Office place-name card index under BRAUNTON.

Common land (partly non-Record Office material)

It was a traditional right of most manorial and estate tenants to be allotted an area of land for communal grazing of livestock. Manor court rolls and other manorial or estate records will often include references to common land. The papers of Torrington Borough Council (ref. 2558), for example, are a useful source for tracing awards and disputes associated with rights of common grazing on the town's common lands.

Enclosure

The term 'enclosure' refers to the closing off of large fields into smaller, often hedged units. In Devon, most enclosure replaced the strip-farming system during the Middle Ages; however, compulsory enclosure of some agricultural land took place under Acts of Parliament between 1760 and 1860. The records resulting from Parliamentary enclosure are called 'enclosure awards', and these can include maps and information on ownership, acreage and land use of the property affected. A handlist of Devon enclosure awards is available; those held by the North Devon Record Office can be located through the subject card index in the searchroom under ENCLOSURE. A more complete range is held by the Devon Heritage Centre, Great Moor House, Bittern Road, Sowton, Exeter 01392 384253.

Farm Buildings (partly non-Record Office material)

Large scale (6 inch and 25 inch to the mile) Ordnance Survey maps are useful for determining the location of farmhouses and farm buildings. The Local Studies Centre holds maps at both scales for north Devon on microfiche for the First Edition (c.1890) and Second Edition (c.1905).

Tithe maps, estate maps, sale particulars, title deeds and leases, census returns and trade directories are also useful sources.

There are few documents that will reveal the precise age of a farm building, although there may be information if the building is listed by English Heritage. Often the only way of assigning an approximate date to a building is by examination of the architectural features. The following books may be of help:

- *Farmhouses in the English Landscape*, Sir William Addison (1986)
- *A History of Farm Buildings in England and Wales*, Nigel Henry (1970)
- *Traditional Farm Buildings of Britain*, R W Brunskill (1987)
- *Devon Building*, ed. Peter Beacham (1990)
- *The Buildings of England: Devon*, Bridget Cherry & Nikolaus Pevsner (1989)

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