

Business and Industry

Useful Books

The following publications will be of interest to the student of individual businesses in Devon as well as those who are interested in local industries in general:

- *Devon – the County Handbook and Industrial Review*, Devon County Council (1960)
- *Business South West*, CBI South West (1986)
- *The South West: a corporate profile, 1988*, INFOTEL (1988)
- *Industries of North Devon*, H W Strong (1889)
- *Industry and Society in the South West*, ed. Roger Burt (1970)
- *Business Documents: their origins, sources and uses in historical research*, John Armstrong and Stephanie Jones (1987)
- *A Guide to Tracing the History of a Business*, John Orbell (1987)
- *Company and Business Records for Family Historians*, Eric D Probert (1994)

Library and North Devon Athenaeum Sources

(Non-Record Office material)

The Local Studies Centre holds various Devon trade directories, which list selectively tradespeople by parish for various years 1830 - 1939 and also contain trade advertisements. The census for north Devon 1841 - 1901 lists the occupations of all individuals noted on the returns. The Centre also holds town plans for Barnstaple (1843) and Bideford (1842) and Goad maps for Barnstaple, Bideford and Ilfracombe c.1970 - 1997; these give the names of shops, tradespeople etc. occupying town centre properties. A large selection of local guides, back issues of certain local newspapers and parish files of newspaper cuttings (some arranged by type of industry) is also available.

References to Business and Industry in Original Documents

Parish records

Parish registers of baptisms from 1813 and marriage registers from 1837 give the occupation of father or bridegroom; occupations are sometimes also listed prior to these dates. Churchwardens' accounts include payments to various tradesmen for work undertaken on church property; similarly, the records of certain charities, in parish records or individual collections, sometimes include accounts detailing payments to workers for repairs, alterations, etc. on their trust properties. Vestry minute books and the records of the overseers of the poor sometimes contain lists of parish apprenticeships placing pauper children with employers. Lists of parish records are arranged alphabetically in order of parish and can be found in the North Devon Record Office searchroom. Individual charity collections can be found by checking the 'List of Collections' on the online catalogue. These sources can also be searched on the Discovery website at <http://discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk/>.

The records of local authorities

Early borough records contain a variety of references to local business and industry; for example, byelaws, regulations and ordinances, and papers concerning fairs, markets and the

regulation of weights and measures. Borough charters, some dating from the 12th century, describe certain privileges given to merchants and tradesmen as well as the bestowal of rights from the Crown to hold markets and fairs. Leases and title deeds may often refer to a property being conveyed as an inn, smithy or other relevant place of trade. The North Devon Record Office holds the following borough and town council records: Barnstaple (refs: BC, 2654, B1, B144 and B242), Bideford (refs: 46, 1064, 2379 and B344), Great Torrington (ref: 2558) and South Molton (ref: 3058).

For the county in general, much of the administration from the 16th century to 1888 was undertaken by the Court of Quarter Sessions, whose records include gamekeepers' deputations, alehouse and printing press licences, canal company deeds and bankruptcy lists. The Devon Quarter Sessions records are held at the Devon Heritage Centre, Great Moor House, Bittern Road, Sowton, Exeter, 01392 384253.

The records of our 'modern' local authorities, dating from the end of the 19th century, can include tenders and contracts as well as registers of certificates and licences; the papers of Barnstaple Town Council, for instance, contain a register of hackney carriage drivers' licences 1930-1947 (ref: 2654A/C88). Files and reports are often useful and may include the minutes of committees drawn from local tradesmen for the purpose of dealing with specific local issues. Rate and valuation books may provide evidence of the use of property for commercial activities.

Estate records

Estate records often contain financial papers, both household and personal; these can include accounts, receipts and invoices, many of which will provide the names of local tradesmen and suppliers. Estate papers will usually also include leases and title deeds. They can be located through both the North Devon Record Office place-name and subject index and may also be found amidst the records of local solicitors, auctioneers and land agents; these collections, by their nature, will show the kind of work carried out, but they may also contain records documenting their own internal administration. Solicitors' and estate collections may be located by using the 'List of Collections' on the Record Office website or the Discovery website at <http://discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk/>.

Transport records

Turnpike trusts (set up from the late 18th century to oversee the building of new roads) and canal, railway and shipping companies all generated their own business records, though the records of most individual canal, railway and merchant shipping companies are held at The National Archives, Ruskin Avenue, Kew, Richmond, Surrey. Nevertheless, the Local Studies Centre holds a varied selection of relevant material. The North Devon Record Office guides on 'Sources for Transport and Communications' and 'Sources for Maritime History' are recommended reading.

Business Records

This section mostly concerns the 19th and 20th centuries, during which most businesses were divided either into joint stock limited liability companies, whose capital was partly made up of publicly-owned shares, and partnerships, whose capital was entirely generated by the respective partners.

Records of central administration

These records concern the formation and dissolution of businesses and their running at management level. For joint stock limited liability companies, articles of association, first conceived around 1860, specify in legal terms the limits and purposes of a company, its capital and the responsibilities of its directors; deeds of partnership perform a similar function. Again for joint stock companies, board minute books and agendas, compulsory from 1908, include the names of directors, and concern the company's day-to-day running, as well as, in the case of initial minutes, the appointment of bankers and auditors, etc.. For partnerships, partners' books or private papers provide similar information. From the late 19th century for many companies, and compulsory from 1928, the chairman's statement (from 1945 one half of the annual report) informs shareholders of major staff changes, comments on the state of accounts and in changes in the nature of products, etc.. The prospectus, drawn up from the 17th century at least but not strictly regulated until 1900, gives a (sometimes overblown) account of the company as well as the names of its directors, bankers, solicitors, etc., and such documents were produced mainly at times when share capital needed to be raised. From 1844 to 1856, and again from 1900, registers of directors giving the directors' names, addresses, date of birth, etc. had to be lodged with the Registrar of Joint Stock Companies; from around 1844 registers of members (shareholders) were also kept. Other records of central administration include letter books of the Secretary, rules, directors' correspondence, bankruptcy papers and dissolutions of partnerships.

Financial records

Although financial records were kept previously, companies were required to keep proper books of account from 1844: basically, journals and ledgers. Originally daily records of all transactions as they occurred, journals were often split into various functions (cash book, sales journal, wages book, etc.). Ledgers recorded a firm's transactions but in different categories (customers, suppliers, areas of expenditure, etc.) and were also eventually split into separate books such as sales or purchase ledgers. Entries were 'posted' from journal to ledger and cross-referenced by a numbering system. Balance sheets and profit and loss accounts (the second half of the later annual report) were devised to provide shareholders with a summary of the business's financial affairs. Kept inconsistently beforehand, balance sheets were compulsory from 1844 to 1856 and then from 1907. They are drawn up on a double-page basis, with liabilities such as loans and creditors on the left and assets such as stock, plant and debtors on the right. The profit and loss account, from 1928, is presented in a similar format but records income and expenditure. Other financial records include papers concerning stocks and shares, banking, insurance and basic financial transactions producing invoices, bills, receipts, etc..

General Administrative Records

This is, by its nature, a rather vague category. Letter books, which can be divided into 'in' and 'out' letters, include correspondence with suppliers and customers, information on equipment, labour relations, finance, etc.. Similarly, a director's or partner's personal diary may give a more human insight into matters as diverse as holiday arrangements, promotions and dismissals, and salary levels. Staff records tend to be scant until the late 19th century and the advent of legislation affecting staff pay and conditions; they include wages books, personnel files, staff rule books, etc. (records relating personally to staff are often subject to closure periods). Papers concerning a business's premises may include leases and title deeds, maps, photographs, tenders for building work, schedules of interior decorations, inventories of furniture and fittings, and fire insurance policies. Other useful sources that can broadly be classed as administrative include patents and licences for new products or processes and dealer or agency agreements such as those between contractor and sub-contractor.

Major collections of business records held by the North Devon Record Office include:

- North Devon Clay Co. Ltd. (refs. 3518B & 4060B)
- Reed of Torrington, wool and general merchants (ref. 3579B)
- O. Nicklin and Sons Ltd., musical instrument dealers (ref. 3798B)
- Squires of Barnstaple, agricultural equipment retailers (ref. B62B)
- Bideford and North Devon Building Society (ref. B66B)
- Barnstaple Water Co./North Devon Water Board (ref. B234)
- Captains G.G. and H.G.G. Clarke, marine engineers of Braunton (ref. B261)
- P.K. Harris and Sons, shipbuilders of Appledore (ref. B354)

For other business collections and also records concerning local industry, try the subject index in the North Devon Record Office searchroom under ACCOUNTS: business, CORRESPONDENCE: business and INDUSTRY or check the 'List of Collections' on the online catalogue.

Finally, the **London Gazette** gives extensive details on bankruptcies, etc.; a set of edited extracts for the north Devon area, 1665 - 1850, is held by the North Devon Athenaeum. The location of other business collections in public and private archives nation-wide can be found through the National Register of Archives at the National Archives, Ruskin Avenue, Kew, Richmond, Surrey or its website at www.hmc.gov.uk.

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