

# Devon Parish Taxpayers

1500 – 1650

VOLUME THREE

Churchstow to Dunkeswell



Todd Gray

DEVON AND CORNWALL RECORD SOCIETY

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*Volume 65*



DEVON PARISH TAXPAYERS  
1500–1650

VOLUME 3  
CHURCHSTOW TO DUNKESWELL

EDITED BY  
TODD GRAY

DEVON AND CORNWALL RECORD SOCIETY

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Cover image: Detail of an early seventeenth-century map of Dartmouth.

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TO THE MEMORY OF MRS VERONICA CHESHER,  
A MENTOR, FRIEND AND AN INSPIRATION



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## PREFACE

Since work for this volume began in 2014 a number of friends and colleagues have helped bring it to fruition. The state of some manuscripts, along with poor writing, has offered occasional challenges and I would like to thank Elly Babbedge, Tony Gale, Dr Joanna Mattingly, Dr Oliver Padel and Jan Wood for their advice with niggles. Other forms of help have come from Dr Clive Burgess, Professor Tom Cain, Professor Sandra Cavallo, Sarah Charman, John Draisey, Gary Knaggs, Professor Maryanne Kowaleski, Elizabeth Lomas, Charlie Pritchard-Williams, Keith Stevens, Dr Jonathan Vage and Professor Jane Whittle. Tony Gale enthusiastically produced his text on Crediton and Professor Catherine Rider has, at every point, been a cheerful and supportive editor and who has, along with Dr Stephen Roberts, made many useful comments on the text. All remaining errors are, of course, my own. Each map was drawn by Tony Gale. The rates have been edited with the kind permission of the Colyton Chamber of Feoffees, Dartmouth Town Council, the Exeter Diocesan Secretary, Governors of Crediton Church and Plymouth Archive. All photographs have been taken by the editor. The cover illustration and Plate 2 (DHC, R9/1/Z/33) appears courtesy of Dartmouth Town Council and Plate 9 (DHC, 1660A/Add4/E1) courtesy of Crediton Church Governors. Finally, a generous gift by Richard Moyses has helped the society fund publication.

Todd Gray  
Taddyforde, Exeter

# INTRODUCTION

This third volume of Devon's early taxation lists covers twenty-nine parishes and 112 taxation lists. Many of the documents are in a poor state of preservation through damp, tearing or have been damaged by rodents and Dean Prior, Dolton and Colyton have manuscripts which are too fragile for full examination. In contrast, the best-preserved collection is that of the borough of Dartmouth and this, as discussed on page xxxvii, was achieved partly through the work of the Devon & Cornwall Record Society nearly a century ago.

The lists have been drawn from archival collections in Barnstaple, Colyton, Exeter, Plymouth and Taunton. There are long sequences for Churston Ferrers, Coldridge, Crediton, Dartmouth and Dean Prior but many parishes have only one or two surviving rates. There are no surviving examples for the remaining twenty parishes in this alphabetical range (either for Clawton, Clyst Honiton, Clyst Hydon, Clyst St George, Clyst St Lawrence, Clyst St Mary, Cockington, Coffinswell, Colaton Raleigh, Combepyne, Countisbury, Creacombe, Cullompton, Culmstock, Dawlish, Denbury, Dowland, Down St Mary, Drewsteignton or Dunchideock).

As with the earlier volumes in this series, the parishes concerned are located across the county. Nearly all are rural in character but even the most urbanised, Crediton and Dartmouth, had extensive countryside. The lists comprise 1 churchyard rate, 2 hospital rates, 3 highway rates, 10 rates for military purposes including a Ship Money rate, 16 tithe accounts including 3 Easter Books, 29 church rates and 46 poor rates. There is one joint church and poor rate as well as four others for which no purpose was specified. The latter were undertaken by sidemen along with churchwardens or overseers of the poor and may also have been intended to maintain both the church building and the poor.

Rates, as discussed in Volume One, had distinct purposes: the church rate supported the maintenance of the building and those for bells, churchyards, clerks, highways, hospitals and the poor are equally self-explanatory. There were also rates which underpinned military activity. Eight parishes in this volume were assessed for their arms in the rate prompted by the general uncertainty following the defeat of the Armada in 1588.

The Easter Books, otherwise Paschal Books, recorded a portion of the 'offerings' and tithes due to clerics, lay people or institutions which were paid at Easter. This volume includes accounts for Clayhanger and Crediton, the former a rural parish and the latter a mix of both urban and countryside, while previous volumes have included similar ledgers for Awliscombe and Broadclyst.

'Offerings', an annual fee exacted on adult parishioners towards the maintenance of the parish priest, stood at two pence at Broadclyst and Crediton but Clayhanger had a wider range dependent upon gender, marital status, age and whether one was a head of household, servant or apprentice. Item 50 lists only the offerings paid at Crediton in 1574 while the Clayhanger accounts of c.1573 to 1582 (Items 13–22) recorded mixed tithes (those concerned with livestock, milk and eggs) and personal tithes (those relating to labour). A nominal fee was also paid for gardens as well as another for the tithe of hay. Praedial tithes (those concerned with grain) were collected separately.

Given that church attendance was mandatory, it is likely that payments were made in one central place, such as the parish church, but collectors may also have perambulated the parish and personally taken money.<sup>1</sup> The extent of many ledgers makes it likely that they were composed a reasonable time after the sums were paid. In most instances scribes would have access to previous accounts.

Few scribes have been identified. In some cases their writing and style of organisation can be identified amongst the lists. Some men, for instance, favoured particular symbols to note

<sup>1</sup> S. J. Wright, 'Easter Books and Parish Rate Books: a new source for the urban historian', *Urban History Yearbook* 12 (1985), pp. 30–5.

payment. Some included extraneous information in their tax lists and ledgers. One such notable example is Item 51 which includes details of the fees for nineteen christenings and five marriages at Crediton in December 1582 and January 1583. These were omitted from the parish register. He also listed twenty-three ‘purifications’, the ceremony in which women were churched after giving birth. Nearly every woman who gave birth had a churching ceremony between one and sixteen days later.

The portion of the population recorded in the lists varied not only from place to place but also according to the type of taxation. While all parishioners paid tithes, those who paid church and poor rates were mostly less than 20 per cent of the population.

### Local parish administration and variations

A discussion in Volume One noted that the study of local taxation revealed the unsuspecting ways in which parish administration varied. These differences have largely escaped historians, at least those in Devon. Many parishes were run either by sidemen, questmen or even synodsmen, much like a parish council today, and they were known variously as the Four, Six, Seven or Eight Men. Their number differed from parish to parish and could change over time in one place. It is possible to confuse them with others similarly named such as the Twenty Men of Colyton who worked alongside the feoffees and were not in the same sense parish administrators.

National legislation on maintaining the poor and public highways increased the number of local officials, as parishes became the preferred administration unit in the late 1500s. Local people constructed different means to meet their ongoing and added responsibilities. For instance, in the late 1500s the parish of Milton Abbot had two collectors for the poor (who gathered the rates), eight bread wardens (of whom there were two in each quarter who sold bread, cheese, girts (coarsely ground oats), candles and meat), a high warden (who sold church property including parishioners’ gifts of sheep and wool, and also collected fines and money for graves), two wardens of the common store (in the North or South Downs where they accounted for bread and ale made from the gathered oats), three receivers (who collected cash from all the wardens except the collectors of the poor) and one or two payers (who oversaw the costs for the maintenance of parish buildings, the military and policing).<sup>2</sup>

No other parish has yet been found that had that organisation. Dean Prior, for instance, appointed each year four new sidemen (the ‘Four Men’) from 1565 to 1622 (with the exception of 1584 to 1587 when there were eight), two wardens (otherwise churchwardens but sometimes known as the ‘head wardens’ or ‘head wardens of the church’) from 1554 to 1628, two ‘supervisors of the ways’ (waywardens who looked after public roads) from 1569 to 1616 and two, three or four ‘collectors’ (otherwise referred to as the ‘overseers’ of the poor) from 1569 to 1626.

Local government arrangements were made uniform through national legislation, particularly in 1835, 1878, 1888 and 1894, but in the period from 1500 to 1650 the local divergences were particularly marked. This can be seen in the establishment and use of sub-districts known as wards which existed in a handful of Devon localities including Dartmouth.

Another was Plymouth which comprised a large ecclesiastical parish but which had been divided into four wards by the late fifteenth century. Looe Street, Old Town, Venner and Vintry Wards each had two constables who were responsible for the collection of rates.<sup>3</sup>

Exeter had four wards which were named after the cardinal points and each had two aldermen who were assisted by two deputies. The aldermen were required to enquire:

<sup>2</sup> Todd Gray (ed.), *Devon Parish Taxpayers, 1500–1650, Abbotskerswell to Beer & Seaton*, DCRS NS58 (2016), pp. 4–8.

<sup>3</sup> R. N. Worth, *Calendar of the Plymouth Municipal Records* (Plymouth, 1893), pp. 26, 64, 73, 88, 118, 140.

‘whether there be any nuisance or purprestures [the wrongful appropriation of land subject to the rights of others] in the city, as by setting of pales, walls, stalls, bulks, porches, windows, and such like, whereby any encroaching is used; or any timber, stones, dunghills or heaps of dirt, or any other thing be cast and laid in the streets to the letting or hindering of any way, or to the annoyance of any person. Also whether any do keep slaughtering within the city, or do keep and feed any hogs, ducks or any other filthy beast. Also whether the streets be kept clean and swept twice in the week at least. Also whether any house be ruinous and stand dangerously, and whether any chimney, oven or furnace, or backs or hearths for fire, do stand dangerously and in peril of fire, and the same not presented by the scavenger [a street cleaner]. Also whether there be crooks, ladders, and buckets in readiness to serve, if need should be, in peril of fire; and whether every man have in readiness a vessel of water at his door when any house is adventured with fire, and not advertised by the scavengers.’<sup>4</sup>

Each constable had to swear an oath that he would ‘present all assaults, frays, bloodsheds, weapons drawn and all other things done against the King Majesty’s peace’.<sup>5</sup> In the late sixteenth century John Hooker outlined the duties of watchmen and wardsmen who were appointed during times of war ‘and troubles’. The former served at night and the latter during daylight hours.<sup>6</sup>

Exeter’s wards were simultaneously known as quarters. An early fourteenth-century tax for the city walls was organised through the wards but sixteenth-century rates were arranged by parish, seventeen of which were located in part or in their entirety within the walls.<sup>7</sup> Exonians may not have identified themselves only as parishioners: it may be indicative that a petition of 1660 was written by residents of the South and West Quarters.<sup>8</sup> Ugborough also had North, South, East and West Quarters<sup>9</sup> while Plymstock had South, East, Oreston and Plymstock Churchtown divisions.<sup>10</sup> Cornwood, at least in its rate of 1628, had two ‘sides’, the east and the west.

Plymouth’s constables may have had similar duties to their counterparts in Exeter and Dartmouth. The latter had wards from at least the fourteenth century.<sup>11</sup> It appointed two constables for each ward, through which the local militia was organised. The custom by 1579 was that two supervisors oversaw the twelve constables who were otherwise known as ‘wardens of the peace’. The wards themselves were named after the first six days in the week.<sup>12</sup> The constables’ other duties included overseeing butchers and innholders in the observation of Lenten restrictions.<sup>13</sup> Dartmouth’s constables also monitored misdemeanours: in 1580, for example, those of Tuesday Ward presented one man for assault, those of Sunday Ward cited another for having an illegitimate child born in his house and those in Friday Ward accused Joan Green of illegally selling ale.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Sidney & Beatrice Webb, *English Local Government from the revolution to: the municipal corporations act: the Manor and Borough* (London, 1908), pt 1, pp. 290–1, 334; Walter J. Harte, J. W. Schopp and H. Tapley-Soper (eds), *The Description of the Citie of Excester*, DCRS (1919), pt III, pp. 813, 838–40.

<sup>5</sup> DHC, ECA, mayors’ court books.

<sup>6</sup> Harte et al., *The Description of the Citie of Excester*, p. 820.

<sup>7</sup> J. H. Wylie & James Wylie (eds), *Report on the Records of the City of Exeter* (London, 1916), p. 402; Maryanne Kowaleski, ‘Taxpayers in late Fourteenth Century Exeter: the 1577 Murage Roll’, DCNQ XXXIV: VI (Autumn 1980), 217; Maryanne Kowaleski, *Local markets and Regional Trade in Medieval Exeter* (Cambridge, 1995), p. 372.

<sup>8</sup> Wylie & Wylie, *Exeter*, p. 50.

<sup>9</sup> PA, 1518A/PO1. They were also named after the cardinal points.

<sup>10</sup> PA, 694/52/C2.

<sup>11</sup> Hugh. R. Watkin, *Dartmouth, Volume One Preformation* (Exeter, 1935), p. 259.

<sup>12</sup> DHC, DD61461, 4 June 1579 & 5 May 1580; Watkin, *Dartmouth*, p. 259.

<sup>13</sup> DHC, DD62004-5, DD61970, DD62002-6, DD62008-9, DD62011.

<sup>14</sup> DHC, DD61461.

The wards were also used for one-off purposes, such as raising money and materials to build the poorhouses in 1601,<sup>15</sup> and the corporation organised its manorial tenants by ward in the early 1600s. In 1625, in lieu of the danger from infectious disease and the attacks of North African pirates, the borough reaffirmed that all male inhabitants ‘of what rank or quality soever they be’ were required to either watch at night or ward during the day. The only exceptions were those who were ill and some officials. Councillors were also expected to regularly accompany the constables both during the day and at night.<sup>16</sup>

Parish taxation was organised by a handful of the community upon its wealthiest members for the benefit of all parishioners. Every known organiser was male and, given many could not sign their own names on the rates, it is questionable how many were literate.

No evidence has yet been found in this period of a woman having signed a Devon parish rate nor are there indications they had a direct role in taxation administration. Married women were generally not mentioned in tax lists except in regards to the payment of offerings in Crediton where all heads of households, whether male or female, were always listed. In general women headed less than 10 per cent of all households. However, in terms of receiving poor relief, the number of women was greater than that of men and this may have reflected a higher proportion of older women in the population who had fewer options in earning a living.

This raises the question as to whether women in Devon served as parish officers in any other capacity. It is known that women were actively involved in parish guilds in the period before the Reformation, particularly in the West Country,<sup>17</sup> and six women were named as churchwardens at St Petrock in Exeter in the early 1400s as well as another seven in Morebath and one in Meshaw in the early 1500s.<sup>18</sup> Some parishes chose their churchwardens on a rota system which was based on the occupancy of properties. Some men served who were not head of their households in places such as Dittisham.<sup>19</sup> At Dean Prior three women were named as churchwardens between 1554 and 1628. Margaret Phillip in 1599, Agnes Knowling in 1626 and Elizabeth Hore in 1628 were listed amongst the office holders of the parish. However, the church rate for 1599 was headed ‘the account of John Phillip deputy for Peter Leate and Margaret Phillip, widow, churchwardens’. There was another unidentified woman who was a parish officer but her son John Collings also carried out her duties as an overseer of the poor.

Two other Devon church accounts have other further details. Kilmington’s records show that thirteen of the 106 churchwardens between 1557 and 1595 were women. In one year, from 1559 to 1560, women occupied both posts. A male deputy replaced a female warden in 1557 as did another for male wardens in 1576 and 1578. Perhaps it should be expected that, like many other aspects, the inclusion of women in parish administration diverged from one place to another.<sup>20</sup> The parish accounts for Littleham in Exmouth are equally detailed and recorded that between 1563 and 1650 seven of the 174 churchwardens were women. It may be significant that two of the overseers of the poor were also women; they served in 1629 and 1630.<sup>21</sup> It could have been that women in some communities were largely marginalised from parish roles after the Reformation, if they had occupied them before, but that the tradition continued in others. However, the apparent absence of women involved in the administration of Devon’s parish taxation suggests a parallel history.

<sup>15</sup> DHC, DD62278B.

<sup>16</sup> DHC, DD62202.

<sup>17</sup> Katherine L. French, ‘Maiden’s Lights and Wives’ Stores: Women’s Parish Guilds in Late Medieval England’, *Sixteenth Century Journal* 29:2 (Summer 1998), 403–25.

<sup>18</sup> Katherine L. French, ‘Women Churchwardens in Late Medieval England’, in Clive Burgess & Eammon Duffy (eds), *The Parish in Late Medieval England*, Harlaxton Society NS XIV (2006), pp. 302–5.

<sup>19</sup> DHC, Chanter 857, folios 55–9.

<sup>20</sup> Robert Cornish, *Kilmington Church Wardens’ Accounts* (Exeter, 1901); DHC, 3047A/PW1-2.

<sup>21</sup> J. M. Dixon, ‘The Churchwarden’s Accounts of the Parish of Littleham-with-Exmouth, 1628–1760’, DCNQ XXXII:1 (Spring 1971), 9; DHC, 2932A/PW7.

The exclusion of women in taxation documents extended to Crediton's scribe's notes of fees for weddings, christenings and purifications in 1582. He failed to record any woman's first name and noted the events in terms of men being grooms, fathers or husbands.

All known scribes were male. One document has two marginal notes which might impart insights into the perspective of the world as viewed from within the male oligarchy of the corporation of Dartmouth. A scribe wrote in 1613:

There are but six things we have need of in this life,  
The grace of God, & a quiet life,  
A contented mind and a honest wife,  
A good report & a fund in store,  
What need a man of any more?

Perhaps the absence of women emboldened a Dartmouth scribe to pen a few lines on the 'four natures in a woman':

A big woman is lazy,  
A little woman is loud.  
A fair woman is sluttish,  
A black woman is proud.<sup>22</sup>

He may have used the latter term in its contemporary sense of describing an individual with dark hair. It is less likely that he was referring to a woman of African heritage and it is probably coincidental that 129 years earlier James Black, Devon's earliest recorded Black man, who was from 'Indea', had lived in Dartmouth. The port must have had African migrants similar to those living in Elizabethan Plymouth or Barnstaple.<sup>23</sup> Curiously, the scribe finished his poetry with 'and if she were as little as she is good, a peach red in June would make her a hood'.<sup>24</sup>

Only one of the thousands of men recorded in these tax lists wrote his memoirs. In it Robert Furse of Dean Prior recommended to his male descendants the best qualities for a wife as well as those to be avoided. Furse gave no guidance on potential husbands but did, however, advise his male descendants on how they should model their own behaviour.<sup>25</sup>

Some rates in this collection illustrate the influence of religion on local taxation. Combe Martin, Combe-in-Teignhead and Dolton each taxed their parishioners in quantities of grain. The barley and oats were likely to have been used for church ales which became obnoxious to convinced Protestants through the late sixteenth century. The rental by parishes of their brewing equipment is seen in Appendix 4. The sixteenth-century change from Roman Catholicism to Protestantism is also demonstrated by the use of a fourteenth-century wrapper for the Clayhanger tithe records. It may have been found in the parish chest and considered no longer to be sacred but regarded as useful only for recycling.

The format for rates differed from one parish to another because there was no template. This included the recording of numerals; some scribes used Roman, others Arabic numerals and a few used both. In 1549 a Crediton scribe also employed what was becoming an archaic system; he calculated using 'an arrangement of dots'. See page 92.

Some scribes neglected to note the purpose of particular rates. In listing contributors some scribes separated parishioners from those who held land but lived outside the parish. These men and women held agistments (also noted as 'justments' or 'jistments'), the practice whereby land was rented to others in order to graze livestock. The numbers of sheep, cattle and horses were not

<sup>22</sup> DHC, DD61851.

<sup>23</sup> Gray, *Devon's Last Slave-Owners*, pp. 26–7.

<sup>24</sup> DHC, DD61851.

<sup>25</sup> Anita Travers (ed.), *Robert Furse, a Devon family memoir of 1593*, DCRS, NS5 (2010), pp. 11–23.

noted but the landholder's name was generally recorded. Some individuals who held land in this fashion were noted as 'justment outholders', 'outholders' and 'holders' but the latter may have held property which was not in agricultural use.

### Three urban areas

This volume includes rates for Colyton, Crediton and Dartmouth, three very different communities. Colyton, an inland market town in East Devon which had the lowest population, was largely unremarkable for a small market town. However, in the late twentieth century it became the focus of extraordinary attention of historians through the Cambridge Population Group's use of its remarkably complete parish register.<sup>26</sup> In contrast, Crediton, which, explained one local gentleman to Lord Burghley in 1579, 'we commonly call Kirton', was a larger and livelier town which benefitted from its proximity to Exeter where its woollen cloth was largely sold.<sup>27</sup> In contrast, Dartmouth's coastal position generated a wider interaction with the world. While Crediton and Colyton had travellers passing through much as other towns,<sup>28</sup> Dartmouth was constantly engaged with people from, or in, far flung parts of the world. Merchant vessels arrived and departed while plying their trades, fishermen were engaged in waters across the North Atlantic and in times of war the port was busy with privateers and prize ships. The common feature of these three places was that in the 1540s they were able to remove rivals and subsequently enjoyed generations of greater independence.

### Colyton

Local administration in Colyton fundamentally altered with the execution in 1538 of Henry Courtenay, 1st Marquess of Exeter and 2nd Earl of Devon, a convicted traitor. Eight years after the Crown seized his property a group of local men purchased part of the manor and established themselves as the Feoffees of Colyton. Their most notable achievement was the establishment of the local grammar school but the feoffees' role in the community extended much further. They repaired bridges, the market house and water courses as well as maintained a fire brigade from 1641. The feoffees evolved to become 'a complete parochial corporation' of which 'all the social machinery of the town, short of the administration of the law, seemed to devolve'.<sup>29</sup>

The church was in the patronage of the Dean & Chapter of Exeter but repairs were undertaken partly through rates, by the feoffees and in 1606 through guaranteed loans (Appendix 1).<sup>30</sup> The geographical size of the parish was extensive and, like Crediton, it had tithings. A rent roll of the manor made in 1538 listed them as Colyton, Stowford, Woodland, Watchcombe and Yardbury<sup>31</sup> whereas Item 39 had a different organisation. In 1658 the parish was reorganised when Shute was divided from Colyton but shortly afterwards the older boundaries returned.<sup>32</sup>

<sup>26</sup> Pamela Sharpe, *Population and Society in an East Devon Parish* (Exeter, 2002), 8–11.

<sup>27</sup> TNA, SP63/68/78.

<sup>28</sup> It is paradoxical that it was probably because of Crediton's remoteness from the sea that Dartmouth's mayor sent Spanish prisoners there in 1598: TNA, SP16/266/1.

<sup>29</sup> Sharpe, *Population*, 16–17.

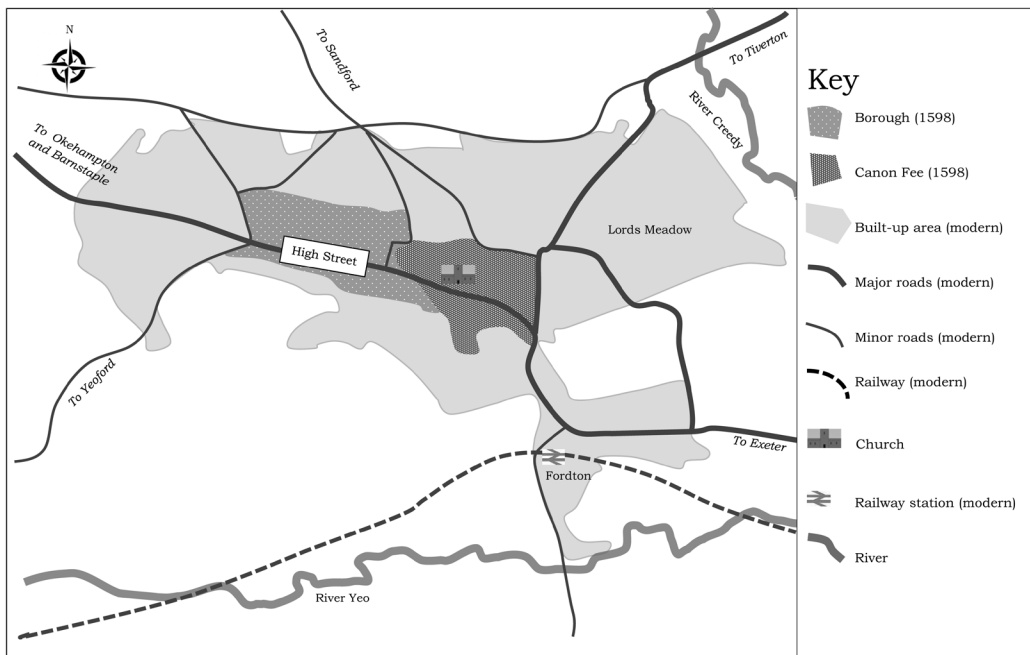
<sup>30</sup> V. J. Torr, 'Exeter Diocese in 1563', DCNQ XXX:II (April 1965), 47.

<sup>31</sup> James Gairdner (ed.), *Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic of the reign of Henry VIII* (London, 1886), Vol. 9, p. 307.

<sup>32</sup> C. E. Welch, 'The Division of Colyton and Shute in 1658', DCNQ XXVII:IV (Oct. 1959), 111–12.

## Credition (Tony Gale)

It may be just one of many unremarkable small Devon towns today, but in 1520 Credition was one of the fifty largest towns in England; a place of some consequence.<sup>33</sup> In 1559, the population of the parish stood at 2,200.<sup>34</sup> The combined parishes of Sandford and Credition – treated as one parish in the Tudor period – extended to 19,809 acres before the boundaries were re-drawn in the nineteenth century.<sup>35</sup> Situated at the junction of two major highways, the town was not only a hub for the agricultural community but was also an important centre for Devon’s cloth industry. Early sources suggest that in mediaeval times it had held a monopoly on the sale of certain types of cloth; one commentator noted that it was ‘the only Market in these Western parts, for the sale of Kersies, Wool, and Yarn’ before the establishment of Exeter’s weekly markets for those commodities during the sixteenth century.<sup>36</sup> Although those markets diminished Credition’s standing in the cloth industry, it continued to be a major manufacturing centre into the seventeenth century and beyond, with a notable speciality in spinning.<sup>37</sup> The records of tithes and other payments in this volume (Items 49–56) can be read alongside a rich collection of manorial and ecclesiastical documents to begin to understand these structures; what they represented; how they compare with other local towns; and how they changed during the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries.



**Map 1.** The town of Credition in the sixteenth century and today.

<sup>33</sup> Christopher Dyer, *Making a Living in the Middle Ages: The People of Britain 850–1520* (New Haven, 2002), p. 308.

<sup>34</sup> Beatrix Cresswell (ed.), *The Wardens’ Accounts of the Governors of Credition 1551–1599* (unpublished), p. 42.

<sup>35</sup> *White’s Directory* (Sheffield, 1850), <https://www.genuki.org.uk/big/eng/DEV/Credition>, accessed Feb. 2022.

<sup>36</sup> Richard Izacke, *Antiquities of the City of Exeter* (London, 1677), p. 119.

<sup>37</sup> Thomas Westcote, *A View of Devonshire in MDCXXX* (Exeter, 1845), p. 120.

### Local governance: Crediton in context

A complicated ecclesiastical and manorial history created a confusing structure of institutions which managed community life in the town and the wider parish. This had a direct effect on the issuing of taxation. At the beginning of the sixteenth century there was an extensive manor, a seigneurial borough,<sup>38</sup> a ‘canon fee’, twelve prebends, an estate supporting a chapel and hospital, and five knights’ fees. Before the Reformation these various institutions had formed two blocs. The bishop of Exeter held the manor and the borough. The church held the canon fee, which covered a large part of the town, and the twelve prebends – a substantial rural estate which funded the surprisingly large ‘college’ of local clergy in the town’s collegiate church. Both the canon fee and the knights’ fees each held their own manorial courts as sub-manors of the Manor of Crediton, but were for most purposes self-governing enclaves. The lordship of the manor changed hands several times during the course of the sixteenth century before Elizabeth I permanently vested it in private hands in 1595.<sup>39</sup> It was the secular role of the parish church which changed more dramatically. When the Crown dissolved collegiate churches in the 1540s, the inhabitants of Crediton purchased the strikingly large and imposing building and undertook to manage the church itself and the, ‘Hereditaments and Goods of the Church of Crediton’. They were also to, ‘create, erect, found, maintain, make and establish’ a new grammar school. A corporation of twelve governors was established by royal charter to discharge these responsibilities.

As additional civic responsibilities passed to local communities under Elizabethan legislation, it was not the borough which took on those responsibilities for the town but the governors. They became, de facto, a ‘closed vestry’ – a prototype parish council whose members were selected for life. Whenever a vacancy arose, a new member was chosen by the remaining governors. Although their secular jurisdiction was initially limited to the canon fee – comprising something less than half of the urban area of Crediton – surviving records reveal that during this period they accrued responsibilities for matters such as the administration of the poor law, military musters and the maintenance of law and order on behalf of the whole of the parish, including all parts of the town.<sup>40</sup> The borough, meanwhile, remained in the ownership of the lord of the manor – an arrangement which persisted until the nineteenth century. Geographically, the borough formed a very small and tightly defined area, stretching for half a mile along the main street and for the most part just one burgage plot deep on either side of that street. The lord of the manor owned nearly all this property.<sup>41</sup> In the sixteenth century he also enjoyed – or assigned – the tolls and dues of Crediton’s substantial market. It appears that although the borough was not set up to operate as a civic body, the trustees did make several payments to the poor and sick. The 1614 accounts for the market include in item, ‘for the monthly payment to the poore owt of the said Borrough of Credyton .. at iijs iiijd p month’; another item ‘for the repayringe of the Almes Houses’; a total of forty-one separate payments to inhabitants, ‘in their sicknesse’; and ten payments for shrouds used at funerals. In total, the market authorities laid out just over £9 in payments to the poor and needy of the borough, representing about 11 per cent of the £80 total income – or about 70 per cent of the net profit of £13 9s 9d – from the market for that year.<sup>42</sup>

A schedule of ‘Burrough Bonds’ from the early seventeenth century reveals that they regularly loaned money at interest, ‘out of the Issues and Profitts of the said Markett’.<sup>43</sup> A document of 1620 confirms how the market trustees were to use the profits of the market, together with the

<sup>38</sup> A seigneurial borough is controlled not by a corporate body of burgesses but by the lord of the manor.

<sup>39</sup> DHC, 2065M/SS5/21.

<sup>40</sup> Cresswell, *Wardens’ Accounts*.

<sup>41</sup> Successive lords of the manor sold or otherwise disposed of many of these properties over the following centuries.

<sup>42</sup> DHC, 252B/APF75.

<sup>43</sup> TNA, C93/8/6.

interest on borough bonds, to the benefit of the townspeople. They were required to, ‘dispose of and imploy such mony as shall be recovered and recoverable upon the... Bills Bondes and Accompts as aforesaid to the use and behoof of the poore and poore decayed tradesmen of the Town and Burrough of Crediton ... according to an order and direction of a decree made by virtue of a Commission heretofore issuing out of the High Court of Chaucerie dated the Seaven and Twentieth Daye of Aprill 1620.’<sup>44</sup> Nonetheless, the chief responsibility of the borough trustees was to operate and sustain the market – which was how most of the income was used. Perhaps it is appropriate to regard the borough at that time as a charitable body with respect to profits from its activities, rather than as a civic entity collecting and distributing public funds specifically for charitable purposes.

How does this compare with other Devon towns during this period? The borough of Barnstaple, like that of Crediton, had mediaeval origins. As for Crediton, Barnstaple’s founding charter no longer exists and the details are unknown. Unlike Crediton, Barnstaple’s borough became incorporated by royal charter in the sixteenth century, with responsibilities for the government of the town through a mayor and a common council of 24 capital burgesses.<sup>45</sup> Like Crediton’s twelve governors they were a closed body, electing their own successors. Tiverton, like Crediton, remained substantially under manorial control in the early part of this period, although unlike Crediton it never seems to have had a seigneurial borough. The population of the town grew dramatically during the course of the sixteenth century – from less than 2,000 in the 1520s to about 4,000 by 1615, when it became an incorporated borough.<sup>46</sup> Under its founding charter, the borough was to be run by a mayor, twelve capital burgesses and twelve assistant burgesses. They managed and regulated the market and maintained the roads and bridges. They had the authority to make their own byelaws and to hold their own courts. Unlike Crediton, where the borough covered only the small commercial centre of the town, the borough of Tiverton ran to 17,650 acres – the whole of the ecclesiastical parish. The local manor courts continued to function, but their residual roles were largely ceremonial.<sup>47</sup>

So by the early seventeenth century, both Barnstaple and Tiverton had incorporated boroughs with well-defined responsibilities for managing the civic lives of their respective communities, while in Crediton it was the church, through its twelve governors, which carried out most civic functions, largely eclipsing the manor and its seigneurial borough.

In some respects, Crediton evolved in ways which had more in common with the smaller East Devon towns of Colyton and Ottery St Mary. As noted earlier, the townspeople of Colyton had acquired local estates which were forfeited by the execution of the marquis of Exeter for treason and they assumed civic responsibilities for the town through a ‘chamber’ of twelve feoffees charged with, ‘good, godly and commendable uses and purposes’. At Ottery St Mary, like Crediton, the local inhabitants purchased their collegiate church when it was dissolved in 1545. There was to be a corporation of four governors who were not only to govern the church but also – like their counterparts at Crediton – to establish and maintain, ‘the kinges newe grammer scole of Seynt Marye Oterey’.<sup>48</sup> So the corporation at Ottery St Mary was set up along lines very similar to that at Crediton: the feoffees of Colyton were charged with duties similar to those which the twelve governors at Crediton came to discharge later in the sixteenth century. These arrangements had more in common with rural communities – run by vestries – than with urban centres like Barnstaple and Tiverton, governed by their newly incorporated boroughs.

<sup>44</sup> TNA, C93/8/6.

<sup>45</sup> <https://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1604-1629/constituencies/tiverton>, accessed July 2021.

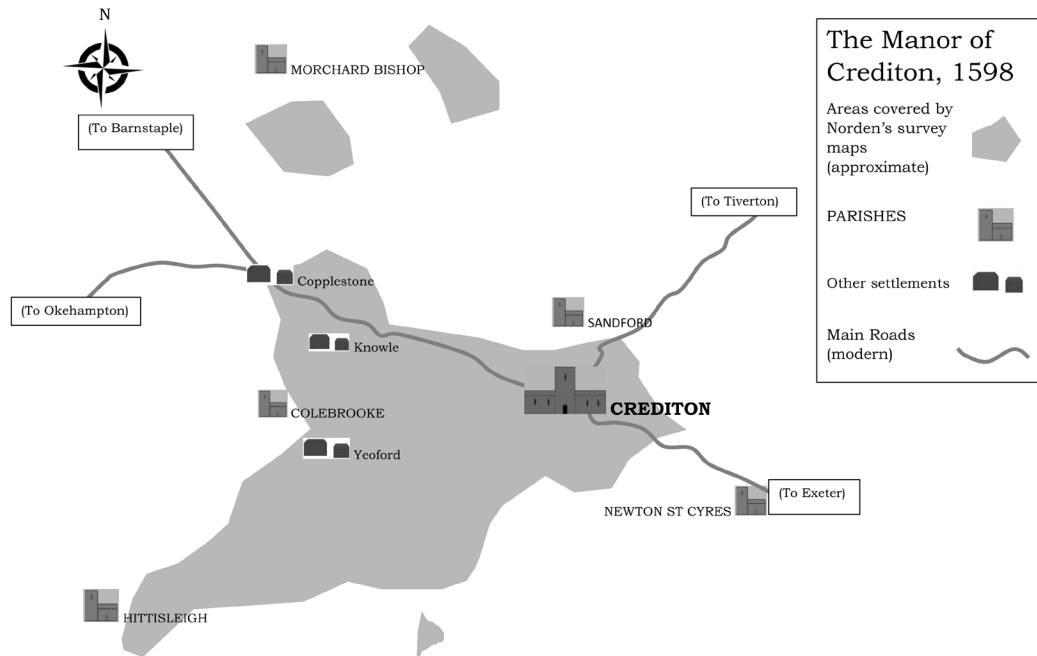
<sup>46</sup> Mike Sampson, *A History of Tiverton* (Tiverton, 2004), pp. 70, 89.

<sup>47</sup> Sampson, *Tiverton*, pp. 89–90.

<sup>48</sup> George Oliver, *Monasticon Diocesis Exoniensis* (Exeter, 1846), p. 262.

## The manor of Crediton

At the beginning of the sixteenth century, the manor of Crediton formed part of the estates of the bishop of Exeter. In 1523, the bishop commissioned a *valor* – a valuation of his estates – which provides details of all its manorial tenants and their property holdings within the parishes of Crediton, Morchard Bishop and what are now Copplestone, Kennerleigh and Sandford. Many hamlets and farmsteads named in the *valor* can be identified to modern-day properties. Distinctive place names like Dunscombe, Hookway, Pydesleghe (Pidsley) and Yewford (Yeoford) form a useful starting point in understanding the geography of the manor – and parish – of Crediton as it stood in the sixteenth century. While the *valor* gives us a great deal of information about the tenants of the manorial properties, it does not include details of the occupiers – much of the land would have been sub-let.



**Map 2.** The manor of Crediton in 1598.

The manor of Crediton changed hands several times during the sixteenth century, with numerous changes in the make-up of the estate. Bishop Turberville had leased some part of it to his ‘kinsman’ Nicholas Turberville before the lordship of the manor and the lease for the bulk of its lands passed to William Killigrew in 1570.<sup>49</sup> A contentiously worded document in the cathedral archives noted that ‘Killigrew had but eleven yeares to come in his Lease of the demeanes and Mannor of Crediton when he and his friends in court prevayled with her Queenes Mai’tie to make D Babbington B’p of Exeter’.<sup>50</sup> It was in 1595, during Babbington’s incumbency, that Elizabeth secured the manor – now standing at about 6,000 acres – to the crown and almost immediately granted it to Killigrew on a permanent basis. This was just one of many manors lost to the bishopric following the Reformation; under Bishop Veysey (1519/51 and 1553/4), ‘of two and

<sup>49</sup> Oliver, *Monasticon*, p. 262.

<sup>50</sup> Exeter Cathedral Archive, D&C861.

twenty Manors belonging to it [the bishopric], he scarcely left eight; and they none of the best'. Babbington's agreement signed away, 'that rich and noble Mannor of Crediton, a Bough as big near as the rest of the Tree'.<sup>51</sup>

Killigrew had already leased the manor for the previous twenty-five years, but from 1595 he held it under a grant in fee farm, an arrangement under which ownership passed to the grantee in return for an annual payment to the crown in perpetuity. It was at this point that he commissioned a survey with an unusually detailed set of maps and accompanying documentation. This was undertaken by the prominent cartographer and surveyor John Norden and provides a wealth of information which complements ecclesiastical and parochial records.<sup>52</sup>

### Church and parish

Before the Reformation, much of the property in the parish of Crediton not held by the manor was in the hands of the local church rather than the bishop. In 1535, Henry VIII commissioned the *Valor Ecclesiasticus* – a valuation of the church lands across the whole country. This revealed that the temporal possessions of the local church at Crediton were valued at £17 18s per annum and the spiritual possessions at £238 11s 2½d per annum.<sup>53</sup>

Following the Reformation, Crediton's church ceased to be a collegiate establishment. The number of clergy was dramatically reduced, and the income available to the church was similarly slashed. The wardens' accounts for 1551 reveal that their total annual income was just £67 16s 9d.<sup>54</sup> The sum of £9 12s 10½d was payable to the crown for the 'Spiritualities of the late Prebend of Priestcombe'. The net income for the year was therefore less than £60: a massive reduction from the £238 assessment recorded sixteen years earlier. The prebends were no longer part of the church estate, and most of the tithes had been confiscated; the wardens' accounts reveal that the only tithe income in 1551 was £10 6s 8d received for privy tithes – levied on earnings or the value of labour.<sup>55</sup> Funding of the local church remained substantially unchanged during Mary's reign, but in 1560 Elizabeth I issued new letters patent which granted the governors an additional £100 a year in tithe income, coming from the prebends and the St Lawrence Lands. This might appear to be a nil-sum gift, as the grant was made in fee farm – with £100 a year payable to the crown. The arrangement took effect in 1563, when the governors managed to collect £100 15s 9½d in tithe income, only slightly more than they needed to pay the crown. However, it soon became clear that the tithes were worth more than this; by 1567 the governors were collecting over £120 a year from this source – and by 1582 it had risen to nearly £250 a year, while the annual payment to the crown remained at £100.

The accounts record payments each year in the 1580s and 1590s, 'for keeping the Easter Book of Crediton' (typically a payment of seven shillings) – and a separate Easter Book for Sandford (five shillings). In many parishes, the vicar's income was derived from the mandatory offerings collected from all communicants at Easter plus receipts from the small tithes.<sup>56</sup> Crediton took a different approach. The vicar was paid a stipend, while all tithe receipts and other collections – collectively referred to in the wardens' accounts as, 'spiritualities' – were paid into the church's general account. It would appear from the earlier of the two sets of sixteenth century Easter Book accounts included in this volume (1582) that the assessments included in the Easter returns were calculated on the same basis as those for the remainder of the year, as they total approximately 25 per cent of the full year's tithe income as revealed by the wardens' accounts for that year. For example, the Easter Book income from the tithing of Woolsgrove was £6 9s 8d: the total for the

<sup>51</sup> John Prince, *Worthies of Devon* (Exeter, 1701), p. 88.

<sup>52</sup> DHC, 1660/A add4/E1.

<sup>53</sup> Joseph Hunter (ed.), *Valor Ecclesiasticus* (London, 1834 edn), pp. 323–5.

<sup>54</sup> Cresswell, *Wardens' Accounts*, p. 1.

<sup>55</sup> Cresswell, *Wardens' Accounts*, p. 1.

<sup>56</sup> S. J. Wright, 'A Guide to Easter Books and related Parish Listings', *Local Population Studies* 43 (Autumn 1989), 18.

year from the same tithing was £25 18s 7d. The 1594 book (Item 52), however, explicitly records figures for the whole year.

However, the opening paragraph of each set of annual accounts states that they include, ‘Receipts of Oblacions, Privy Tithes and Garden (i.e. Guardian) Money at Easter’. At Easter 1582, £22 6s 7d was received from oblations, £4 14s 4d from privy tithes and £2 3s ½d from garden money. It might appear that the records referred to in Crediton as Easter Books were in fact assessments of tithe liability for the whole year; and that while the 1582 accounts hark back to an earlier era when there was a separate calculation of income for the spring quarter, by 1594 they were treated as a record of all tithes payable during the year.

When it comes to the secular roles of the twelve governors, we find several references to payments entered in the wardens’ accounts. In 1595, 7s 8d was paid, ‘for the carriage of 12 men’s armour to St Thomas Parish and to Alphington twice’ and 3s 2d for, ‘new sheafs for swords and daggers that were lost and mending of the rest’ – clear evidence of their responsibilities for Crediton men at that year’s militia muster. In the same year, the warden’s own accountant claimed 2s 8d, ‘for being Clerk to the Constables in writing of Hue and Cry precepts, Muster Book and all other their receipts and payments incident to their office as parcel of his fee of 5s a year for doing thereof’.<sup>57</sup> Regarding the governors’ role in poor law administration, there are several entries each year from the Elizabethan era onwards, including the following from 1595. ‘For a petticoat cloth for Wilmot Browning and for lining and making: 6s’; ‘For curing the man that was hurted in the highway: 6s 8d’; ‘Distributed to the poor in the East and West Towns against Easter: 41s’; ‘Distributing money to the poor every week 5s: £8’.<sup>58</sup>

#### Tithings and prebends

For some years, the wardens’ accounts also include details of individuals who had not paid their tithes. In 1597, the list of defaulters ran to sixty-eight names, including fifty-four who can be matched against the 1594 tithe list. Not only does the tithe list contain many more names; it also reveals further information not recorded elsewhere. For example, we learn that Margery Broadmead paid tithes for two adjoining holdings at Stockey Downs and Moore; that William Killigrew (Lord of the Manor) was paying tithes on, ‘le Dye House’ and for, ‘a parcel of Dartes Downs’ – and apparently nothing else; and not only that William Marten had taken over a tenement, ‘which was Mr Wyvell’s’ but also that Marten was a merchant, ‘of Exeter’. In an era when ready money was in short supply, the church authorities sometimes resorted to seizing goods in lieu of unpaid tithes. In 1540, the dean of Crediton seized a quantity of broom – presumably stock-in-trade? – from John Howe and John Walshe in lieu of overdue payments.<sup>59</sup>

Perhaps the most useful additional information afforded by these tithe lists is the light they shed on the evolving pattern of tithings within the parish of Crediton and the changing status of Sandford.

<sup>57</sup> Cresswell, *Wardens’ Accounts*, p. 362.

<sup>58</sup> Cresswell, *Wardens’ Accounts*, p. 363.

<sup>59</sup> TNA, C1/1011/50-52.

**Table 1.** Schedule of Tithings as included in the returns from 1549 to 1644 (NB All spellings have been standardised).

<b>1549</b>	<b>1574</b>	<b>1582</b>	<b>1594</b>	<b>1619</b>	<b>1630</b>	<b>1636</b>	<b>1644</b>
<b>A Collection</b>	<b>Easter Book</b>	<b>Easter Book</b>	<b>Tithe Account</b>	<b>Church Rate</b>	<b>Tithe Account</b>	<b>Tithe Account</b>	<b>Tithe Account</b>
East Town	East Town			Canon Fee	Canon Fee	Canon Fee	Canon Fee
Borough	West Town			Borough	Borough	Borough	Borough
Kirton Tithing	Town Tithing	Town Tithing	Town	Town Tithing	Town Tithing	Town Tithing	Town Tithing
	Prebend		Poole				
	Priestcombe	Priestcombe	Priestcombe				
Rudge	Rudge	Rudge	Rudge	Rudge	Rudge	Rudge	Rudge
	Stowford	Stowford	Stowford	Knoll (Knowle)	Knoll	Knoll	Knoll
				Uton	Uton	Uton	Uton
Yewford	Crosse	Crosse	Crosse	Yewford	Yewford	Yewford	Yewford
Woodland	Woodland	Woodland	Woodland	Woodland	Woodland	Woodland	Woodland
	Aller	Aller	Aller				
	Carswell	Carswell	Carswell				
	Henstill	Henstill	Henstill				
	Woolsgrove	Woolsgrove	Woolsgrove				
	Rents	Rents	Parish Rents	Sandford	Sandford	Sandford	Sandford
				Parish Rents	Parish Rents	Parish Rents	Parish Rents
				Parke Ground	Parke Ground	Parke Ground	Parke Ground
			Exminster				

Table 1 lists the breakdown of each return to facilitate comparisons. It must be noted that these and other contemporary records habitually use the terms ‘prebends’ and ‘tithings’ loosely, confusingly and interchangeably. Strictly speaking, Crediton had no ‘prebends’ – lands providing income for individual churchmen known as ‘prebendaries’ – following the dissolution of the collegiate church in 1546/7; but the names of the former prebends continued to be applied to several tithings throughout the following century. These are tithings – subdivisions of the parish for the purpose of collecting tithes – and would have had no role as prebends. In some instances the relationship between the name of each tithing and the land within it is unclear. Reichel’s work on the hundreds of Devon goes some way towards clarifying the geography of the tithings as listed from 1619 onwards (Items 53–6), while leaving some unexplained gaps and ambiguities.<sup>60</sup>

For reasons described above, the urbanised area of Crediton is generally split between the East Town (or Canon Fee) and the West Town (or Borough). The return for 1594 anomalously includes a single entry for ‘Town’. It appears that the surviving return for that year is incomplete; comparisons with returns for other years suggest that ‘Town’ relates to the Town Tithing (see notes relating to ‘Town Tithing’ and ‘Poole’, below). All the returns except for 1594 include the Town Tithing which was referred to in 1549 (Item 49) as ‘Kerton Tithing’ – Kirton being an alternative name for Crediton. Reichel commented that the Town Tithing included the estates of Newcombes, Downes, Little Fulford and Bradley – encompassing a swathe of the parish lying immediately north and east of the town.<sup>61</sup> See also the entry for Poole, below.

#### The Twelve Prebends

The 1594 return (Item 52) is the only one to refer to Poole by that name but the substantial overlap with the list of entries under ‘Prebend’ in the 1582 return suggests that the two were one and the same. Poole appears to have encompassed the Great Meadow (otherwise known as Lords Meadow) and a number of mills, including ‘the Four Mills’ at Fordton and Mr Dunscombe’s ‘New Mill’ at what became Downes. From 1619 onwards, some or all of these properties – including ‘the fower mills’ and ‘the great meadow’ – are listed as part of the Town Tithing (see above).

Priestcombe gave its name to one of the tithings listed in 1582 and 1594 (Items 51 & 52). After the tithings were reorganised (between 1594 and 1619) it became part of the tithing of Knowle.

Rudge lent its name to one of the tithings listed in 1549 and again from 1594 onwards. Reichel commented that it included Dunscombe, Fordton, Carsford and Trowbridge.<sup>62</sup> It was referred to in some accounts as, ‘Rudge Episcopi’ to avoid confusion with the farm of Rudge in Sandford. Reichel himself contributed to that confusion by a reference to the latter elsewhere in his *Hundreds of Devon*.<sup>63</sup>

Stowford gave its name to one of the tithings listed in 1582 and 1594. After the tithings were reorganised it became part of the tithing of Knowle. From 1619 onwards the tithing of ‘Knoll’ (Knowle) subsumed the former prebends of Priestcombe and Stowford. Reichel noted that it included Spencecombe and Ford (south-east of Yeoford).<sup>64</sup>

Uton was one of the eighteen tithings of Crediton in the 1340s, but had lost that status by the beginning of the sixteenth century.<sup>65</sup> It appeared as one of the tithings from 1619 onwards. Reichel noted that it included Uton Arundel, Yew and Venny Tedburn as well as the settlement of Uton.

<sup>60</sup> Reichel, ‘The manor and hundred of Crediton’, *DAT LIV* (1922), 165–8. The estates and settlements are listed using the names that would have been familiar to Reichel’s contemporaries.

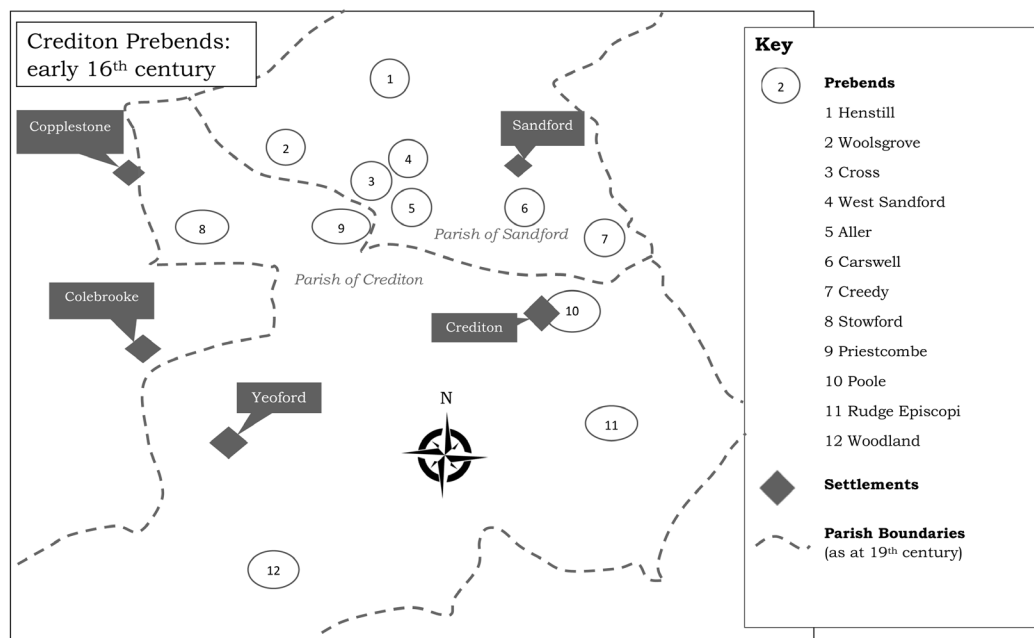
<sup>61</sup> Reichel, ‘The manor’, 154.

<sup>62</sup> Reichel, ‘The manor’, 154.

<sup>63</sup> Reichel, ‘The manor’, 166.

<sup>64</sup> Reichel, ‘The manor’, 154.

<sup>65</sup> Reichel, ‘The manor’, 153.



**Map 3.** The prebends of Crediton, early sixteenth century.

Yewford is listed as a tithing in 1549. That name did not appear in the returns for 1574 (which appears to relate only to the town of Crediton and its immediate surrounds), 1582 or 1594 (Items 50–2). In those returns, the tithing of Crosse appears to subsume the holdings of Yewford. The name of Yewford appears once again from 1619 onwards. Reichel noted that it included Hollacombe, Keymelford and Posbury as well as Yewford (i.e. Yeoford) itself.<sup>66</sup>

Although Woodland was another prebend there does not appear to have been a prebendal farm associated with it. Reichel suggested that Woodland ‘is really in the parish of Colebrooke’ but the whole range of returns from 1549 to 1644 clearly identify it as one of the tithings of the parish of Crediton.<sup>67</sup>

Aller was also one of the tithings in 1582 and again in 1594. From 1619 onwards it is subsumed into ‘Sandford’. Carswell, a prebend, appeared as one of the tithings in 1582 and again in 1594. From 1619 onwards it was subsumed into ‘Sandford’. Creedy, a prebend, did not appear in any of these returns as a ‘tithing’. It lay within what became the parish of Sandford. Crosse, another prebend, gave its name to one of the tithings listed in in 1582 and 1594. The prebendal farm of Crosse lay within what became the parish of Sandford, but many of the other properties in the tithing lay within Crediton. After the tithings were reorganised, those properties became part of the tithing of Yewford (i.e. Yeoford).

Henstill also appeared as one of the tithings in 1582 and again in 1594. The prebendal farm of Henstill lay within what became the parish of Sandford, but many of the properties within the tithing lay within Crediton. After the tithings were reorganised, those properties became part of the tithings of either Yewford or Uton (the exact boundaries of each are not known). West Sandford, another prebend, does not appear in any of these returns as a ‘tithing’. It lay within what became the parish of Sandford.

<sup>66</sup> Reichel, ‘The manor’, 154.

<sup>67</sup> Reichel, ‘The manor’, 154.

Woolsgrove was a tithing in 1582 and again in 1594 but from 1619 onwards it was subsumed into 'Sandford'. When the corporation of twelve governors of Crediton church was established in 1547/8, it was specified that three should be from Sandford, 'a village and hamlet within the said parish'. The wardens' accounts for 1559 referred to Sandford as 'a next [i.e. annexed] unto Crediton and a daughter to the same even now at this daye'.<sup>68</sup> Where Norden's survey of 1598 lists the local parishes, it cited Sandford as being 'a chapple to Crediton'.<sup>69</sup> But Sandford's status was ambiguous. The lay subsidy returns for 1544 and 1581 list the inhabitants of Sandford as if it was a separate parish: but there was no 'Sandford' list in the lay subsidy returns for 1524 or the muster roll for 1569. Stoate, who edited those returns, commented that the Sandford return for the muster roll 'appears to be missing'.<sup>70</sup> It seems rather that it is the lay subsidies of 1544 and 1581 which are anomalous, as Sandford was not a parish in its own right. Crediton and Sandford were two substantial and distinct settlements within the same parish, one with the parish church, the other with a chapel of ease. The antiquarian William Pole noted in the early 1600s 'Sandford hath his church, but is of the parish of Crediton'.<sup>71</sup> Reverend George Oliver, writing in 1846, commented that Sandford had long been a chapel of ease within the parish of Crediton, which by his time was, 'reputed a distinct parish for all secular purposes'.<sup>72</sup>

The manor of Crediton as granted to Sir Thomas Darcy when it was first wrested from the bishops of Exeter in the 1540s included all twelve prebends; but the grant to Killigrew in the 1590s did not include any land in what became the parish of Sandford. Rudge Episcopi, Priestcombe, Woodland, Yewford, Uton and Knowle all lay within the Manor of Crediton (as did Poole): the former prebends of Aller, Carswell, Creedy, Cross, Henstill, West Sandford and Woolsgrove all lay beyond the boundaries of the manor. It might be that for a period in the sixteenth century it was deemed appropriate and convenient to use the names of former prebends for the tithings, but in the seventeenth century it seemed more appropriate to group together the cohesive collection of prebends which lay outside the manor of Crediton under the name of Sandford; and to name the tithings within the manor after the principal settlements in each.

Parish rents appear as a separate item in several of these returns. It will be noted that they are rents, not tithe payments. The individual rents included in these lists change over time. Most of the parish church's real estate lay within the Canon Fee or the Town Tithing, so individual 'rents' sometimes appear under one or other of those schedules.

The former Great Park had been disparked by 1571.<sup>73</sup> At the time of Norden's survey of 1598 there were no less than twenty-two tenants holding closes within the area he still referred to as 'The Great Park'.<sup>74</sup> It is not clear why the 'Park Ground' was only listed separately in the returns from 1619 onwards – or indeed how it had been treated for tithing purposes before that date.

Exminster is and was a separate parish, lying some twelve miles south-east of Crediton. The twelve governors became responsible for its parochial affairs under the terms of Edward VI's Charter of 1547 and the accretion of local government responsibilities later in the sixteenth century.<sup>75</sup> Contemporary records relating to Exminster typically record it separately from Crediton, but for some unspecified reason it was named and listed in the 1594 tithe returns as one of the 'prebends'.

Crediton's complex and shifting parochial and manorial arrangements have long been a source of confusion, but by studying these tithe returns, church rates and Easter Books alongside other

<sup>68</sup> Cresswell, *Wardens' Accounts*, p. 42.

<sup>69</sup> DHC, 1660/A add4/E1/p. 6.

<sup>70</sup> T. L. Stoate & A. J. Howard (eds), *The Muster Roll of Devon for 1569* (Paignton, 2004), p. iii.

<sup>71</sup> William Pole, *Collections towards a Description of the County of Devon* (London, 1791), p. 226.

<sup>72</sup> Oliver, *Monasticon*, p. 79.

<sup>73</sup> Lincolns Inn Library and Archive, Maynard M.45, fol. 16r.

<sup>74</sup> DHC, 1660A/add 4/E1, p. 26.

<sup>75</sup> Samuel Lysons, *Magna Britannia being a concise topographical account of the several counties of Great Britain; Volume the Sixth containing Devonshire* (London, 1822), p. 148.

manorial and ecclesiastical records we can get a better understanding of how they evolved over the century following the Reformation. A comparison with other small towns in Devon highlights the surprising diversity of institutions which developed during that time. It is possible to track the evolution of the various tithings within the parish – and the changing relationship between Sandford and Crediton – by a close examination of these eight sets of returns, stretching across almost one hundred years.

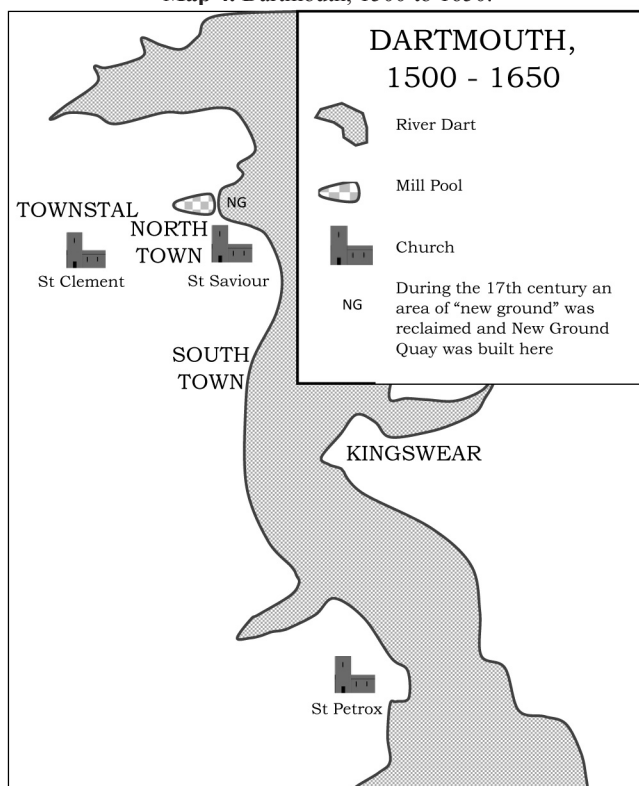
#### Dartmouth

In terms of the history of parish taxation, Dartmouth is perhaps unique in Devon for its parishioners not having to pay church rates. A scribe acknowledged this in 1613 when he wrote the glebe terrier for St Saviour:

‘there was never any rate made to the knowledge of the said churchwarden for the reparation of the said chapel but the same is and hath always been repaired at the charge of the corporation of the said town and by their common stock’.<sup>76</sup>

The history of the town’s finances, and the manner in which it taxed local people, can be found in the corporation’s archive, one of the most extensive such collections in Devon. Its landscape was a particular reason for its prosperity and thus the healthy state of the borough’s finances.

**Map 4.** Dartmouth, 1500 to 1650.



<sup>76</sup> DHC, Diocese of Exeter, Principal Registry, Glebe Terriers, Dartmouth, 1613.

Dartmouth is situated on the west bank of the Dart directly across from the village and parish of Kingswear. The town lies between two promontories with a tidal inlet which lay in between. Across this was built The Fosse, a causeway on which stood two grist mills with a salt-water pool on the inner side. In this period they were known as ‘the salt mills’.<sup>77</sup> The northern promontory, which rises to 354 feet in height, was named Townstal and its ridge of land falling to the river, Hardness. Most of the town of Dartmouth lay to the south and the southern promontory was known as Clifton. During this period there was extensive development along the river, in building houses and quays on the mud. A variety of rival interests had civil and ecclesiastical jurisdiction in the port but in the early sixteenth century the corporation, led by the small mercantile elect who comprised the council, increasingly became independent.

Dartmouth’s topography at the mouth of the river contributed to a complicated pattern of legal jurisdictions. It derived a commercial advantage from being a deep-water port with easy access to Devon’s main foreign trading ports. In 1522 the Earl of Surrey advised Henry VIII:

‘In my life I saw never a goodlier haven... at the entry of the haven there is a blockhouse made of stone and of the same side another old castle, on the other side there is another other old castle and besides that another other blockhouse, and a chain ready to be laid over the haven and all things ready for the same. The town is not two arrows’ shot from thence. And the ships may lie two miles further within the haven, under John Gilbert’s house, and at the least five fathoms at a low water. The chain that is at Portsmouth may be laid within the other chain, so that we here think it shall not be possible for any ships to come within the haven, the most danger we see is that if the enemies would come with a great pinnace and land at a place called Torbay, which is but two miles from the place where the ships shall ride, they might with casting fire into them do some hurt or else some fellow in the night might steal near them and throw wildfire into them. The remedies whereof after our opinions is this: that your grace should write unto the bishop of Exeter, and to all the best gentlemen of Devonshire showing unto them that your grace is informed that they be now making a blockhouse a little beside Brixham within Torbay, and if they would make another at Churston, within the said Torbay, your grace would help them with ordnance and powder.’<sup>78</sup>

In 1599 an Italian summarised Dartmouth as:

‘a large port [with capacity] for 600 vessels, and at low tide five yards of water; at the entrance [is] a bastion of earth with six or eight pieces of artillery; [and] further in a castle with 24 pieces and 50 men; and more inside and then another earth bastion with six pieces or iron all in good order. The place is not very large but not walled, the mountains serving for walls. The people are warlike, and constantly at sea with vessels to attack the Spaniards and other enemies. On the other side [of the river] there is a very beautiful village with good people. In the port are generally 30 vessels of merchandise or war’.<sup>79</sup>

Throughout this period the Crown arranged that the borough would maintain the port’s defence: an annuity was paid out of the port’s customs to the corporation.<sup>80</sup> Dartmouth trained its militia independently of the rest of Devon.<sup>81</sup> Dartmouth’s unusually high number of wards may be connected to the borough’s military responsibilities.

The vulnerability to landings continued into the seventeenth century. In 1626 the mayor warned national government that Torbay and Blackpool Sands in Stoke Fleming were ideal landing places

<sup>77</sup> DHC, DD61441.

<sup>78</sup> J. S. Brewer (ed.), *Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic, of the Reign of Henry VIII* (London, 1867), Vol. 3, p. 997.

<sup>79</sup> TNA, SP12/270/139. I am grateful to Sandra Cavallo for her translation of the Italian text.

<sup>80</sup> Watkin, *Dartmouth*, p. 156; Russell, *Dartmouth*, pp. 53–6.

<sup>81</sup> DHC, DD61858.

for enemies who could ‘take the hills which are above us and beat us out of the town’.<sup>82</sup> Visitors repeatedly noticed the deep river channel and the steep hills. In the 1690s Reverend John Prince, the author of *The Worthies of Devon*, described it as:

‘A large populous town, situate on the south side of a very steep hill, which runneth from east to west a considerable length of near a mile, whereby the houses as you pass on the water seem pensil and to hang along in rows, like gallipots in an apothecary’s shop, for so high and steep is it, that you go from the lower to the higher part thereof by stairs and from the bottom to top requires no less, in some places many more, than an hundred’.<sup>83</sup>

A century later another visitor centred on the buildings and the people who lived in them. Daniel Carless Webb wrote Dartmouth:

‘has a peculiar appearance, the houses seeming to be placed one on the top of another... I am sorry to observe that the inhabitants were as much in want of cleanliness as their neighbours.’<sup>84</sup>

Another traveller later made equally disparaging remarks about local people when he observed it was:

‘a seaport, built upon the side of a rock, the scent of which greets the traveller with pitch, tar and dried fish. Nature seems to have kept her original rudeness here, for they are all very rough, and if they possess any improvement from art, it is the art of swearing, in which few could beat them. The women being the most vulgar, they go a fishing, row passengers over in the boats, with their petticoats tied between their legs like trousers, and a short pipe in their mouths. They therefore being no very desirable objects it was no great wonder the captain was not tempted to break his [marital] oath’.<sup>85</sup>

Throughout this period Dartmouth was nationally prominent in times of war, particularly during the long Elizabethan conflict with Spain, which involved the seizure of merchant vessels. The most famous incident took place in 1592 when the *Madre de Dios* was brought into the port. This Portuguese carrack had been captured off the Azores and Robert Cecil, later Secretary of State, rushed from London to secure the Crown’s portion of the East Indian cargo. He famously commented:

‘I am passed by Exeter where I did take this course, whomsoever I met by the way, within seven miles that either had anything in cloak, bag or malle which did but smell of the prizes, either at Dartmouth or Plymouth (for I assure your lordship I could well smell them almost), such hath been the spoils of amber & musk amongst them. I did (though he had little about here) returned him with me to the town of Exeter where I stayed any which could convey news to Dartmouth and Plymouth at the gates of the town. I compelled them also to tell me where any trunks or malls were, and I by this inquisition finding the people stubborn till I had committed two innkeepers to prison, which example would have won the Queen £20,000 a week past... My lord, there was never such spoil.’<sup>86</sup>

<sup>82</sup> TNA, SP16/32/120.

<sup>83</sup> John Prince, *The Worthies of Devon* (Plymouth, 1810 edn), p. 477.

<sup>84</sup> Daniel Carless Webb, *Observations and remarks during four excursions made to various parts of Great Britain* (London, c.1811).

<sup>85</sup> *A Trip to Bath and a tour through the west* (London, c.1790), p. 35.

<sup>86</sup> M. Oppenheim, *The Maritime History of Devon* (Exeter, 1968), pp. 49–50; John Appleby, ‘Devon privateering from early times to 1688’, in Michael Duffy et al. (eds), *The New Maritime History of Devon* (Exeter, 1992), p. 94; TNA, SP12/243/26, 19 Sept. 1592.

The cargo included porcelain dishes, ivory, ‘Turkey carpets’, rubies, silk and spices.<sup>87</sup> Cecil seized at Exeter:

‘A great pot of musk, 26 pieces of calico lawn, 1 piece of calico, 8 bundles of twisted satin, 2 pieces of white silk, 59 pieces of white cipres, carnation taffeta a remnant, checked taffeta a remnant, a white quilted kirtle, three spoons of mother of pearl, a bag of pearl wherein is two or three pieces of gold string work with rubies and crystal, a bag of seed pearl and a quilt for a bed and a canopy.’

The value was estimated at half a million pounds but a considerable portion was stolen or embezzled.<sup>88</sup>

In 1625, twenty years after the declaration of peace between England and Spain, the country was again at war and for five years prize ships were once again brought into Dartmouth. The war also brought French and Spanish privateers which attacked English vessels including those of Dartmouth. From the early 1600s the port also suffered from the depravations of corsairs from North Africa.

In this period Dartmouth’s commerce was dominated by cloth which was transported from Totnes down the river and by overseas fishing. Dartmouth was involved in a network of fisheries which extended from the inshore fisheries, particularly that for pilchards along the south coast, to others in the English Channel, the North Sea, Ireland, Iceland, New England and Newfoundland. The latter was the preferred fishery and in 1619 no less than twenty-four Dartmouth ships returned directly from Newfoundland. The *Nicholas*, *Falcon*, *Christopher*, *Comfort*, *Grace*, *Gabriel*, *Sweepstake*, *Content*, *Edward Bonaventure*, *Anne*, *Holligrove*, *Rose*, *Handmaid*, *Revenge*, *Swiftsure*, *William*, *Mayflower*, *Primrose*, *Gift*, *Prosperous*, *Unity*, *Hopewell*, *Valentine* and *Mary* were joined by the *Blessing* of Kingswear, *Eleanor* of Salcombe, *Samuel* of Dittisham, *Jonas* of Kingswear and the *Minion* of Dittisham. Other ships sailed first to Portuguese, Spanish or French ports where they sold cured fish and subsequently returned home to Dartmouth.<sup>89</sup> By the early 1600s the port had become the greatest centre for shipping and seafarers in South Devon.<sup>90</sup>

In 1619 ships also arrived from the Channel Islands, Scotland, Ireland and even the Amazon. The port’s records are riddled with references to men from distant places. They included seven Dutch men who died shortly after arriving in 1610 from the East Indies<sup>91</sup> and in 1619 the mayor provided assistance to men from Germany, Ireland, France and the Low Countries as well as others from across Great Britain; amongst them were several dozen shipwrecked men.<sup>92</sup> Individual events were responsible for sizeable numbers of aliens in the port: in 1637 over one hundred shipwrecked French mariners needed financial help for their maintenance and for their return home.<sup>93</sup> There were also some foreign women in the port such as Marie Parie, from France, who had an illegitimate child with local mariner John Pre, and who in 1625 was pregnant with his second but Pre, he explained, could not marry her until his wife died.<sup>94</sup> Visitors occasionally included illustrious people such as the Persian Ambassador in 1626 and explorers such as Henry Hudson.<sup>95</sup>

<sup>87</sup> R. A. Roberts (ed.), *Calendar of the Manuscripts of the Most Hon. the Marquis of Salisbury, Preserved at Hatfield House, Hertfordshire* (London, 1892), p. 231.

<sup>88</sup> TNA, SP12/243/27; Russell, *Dartmouth*, pp. 75–8.

<sup>89</sup> DHC, DD61979.

<sup>90</sup> Todd Gray (ed.), *Early-Stuart Mariners and Shipping*, DCRS NS33 (1990), xvi–xxii.

<sup>91</sup> DHC, Dartmouth St Saviour, PR1, 11–18 May 1610.

<sup>92</sup> DHC, DD61978 & DD61793.

<sup>93</sup> TNA, SP16/363/115.

<sup>94</sup> DHC, DD62149.

<sup>95</sup> DHC, DD62213.

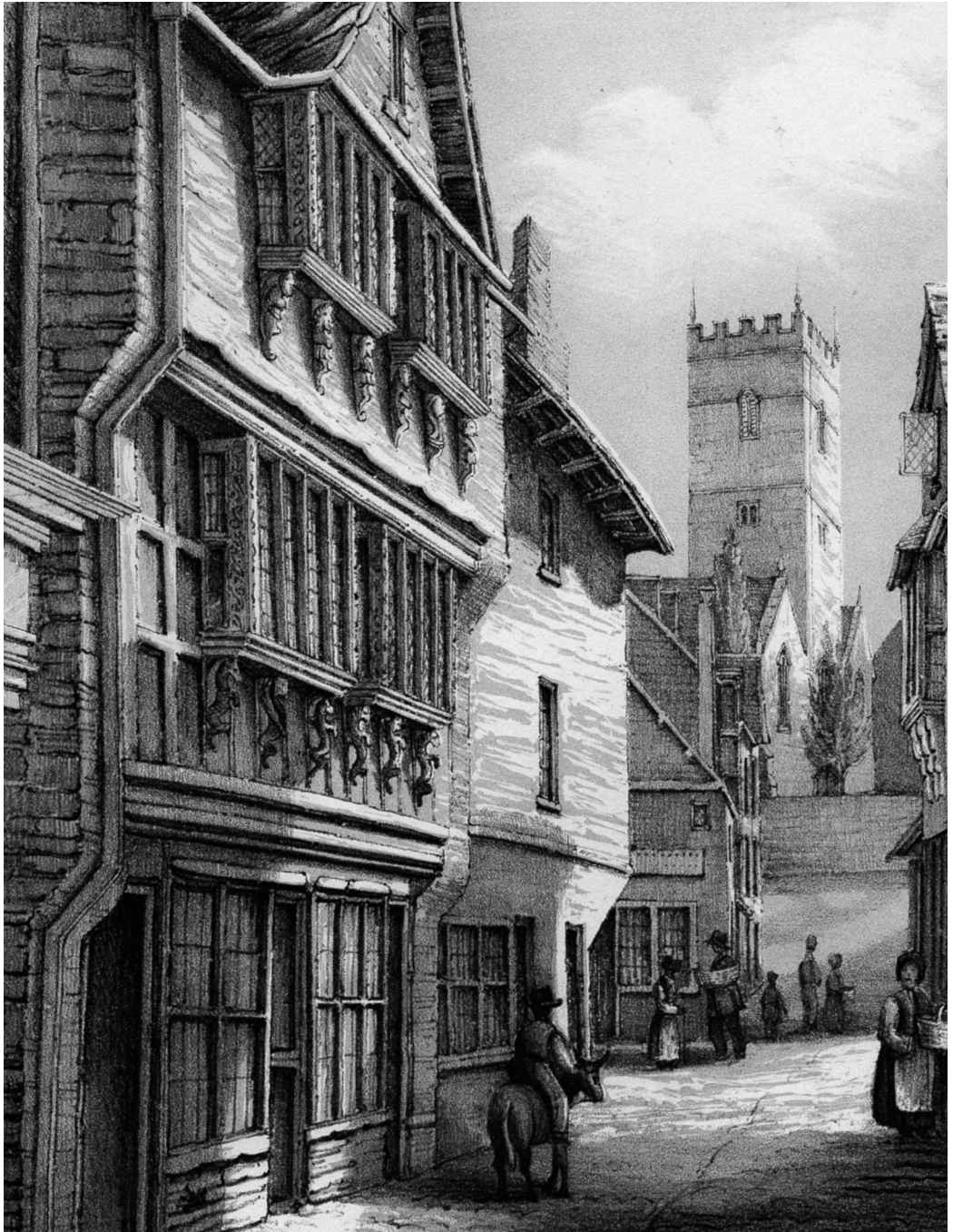


Plate 1. Lithograph showing the west end of St Saviour's Church from the Fosse, Dartmouth, 1845.

The mayor cited this ‘intercourse of strangers’ as one of the chief characteristics of the town when in 1604 he asked James I to renew the charter.<sup>96</sup> The corporation was expected to interrogate suspicious men who had come from abroad such as Nicholas Flute, a local man, who voyaged in the *Samaritan* of Dartmouth to visit Rome in 1594<sup>97</sup> and the travels of Christopher Hubbard caused the mayor to write to Cecil four years later. Hubbard had been born in Padstow, was taken prisoner by the Spanish and served in the galleys off Mexico and Cuba before returning to Spain.<sup>98</sup> In 1619 the son of a Londoner was imprisoned when he arrived from Spain: John Davis was ‘a professed and dangerous Roman Catholic... apt to infect his Majesty’s subjects with the dangerous positions of popery and disloyalty’.<sup>99</sup> Other men were questioned for Continental news particularly regarding foreign military movements.

When Dartmouth officials examined foreign visitors they drew upon their mercantile skills in being conversant in other European languages or were able to enlist other local men. In this the character of Dartmouth was most likely dissimilar to Colyton or Crediton. Men arrived in the port and their behaviour at sea required investigation. For instance, it transpired in 1613 that Captain ‘Cutting Dick’ had recruited crewmembers in a wine tavern in Brixham before going on to take some sixty French, Flemish, Scottish and English vessels in the Channel. John Tooley, John Pomeroy and John Humphrey were some of the Brixham men who subsequently faced charges of piracy.<sup>100</sup> That year another vessel, crewed mainly by local men, also came into Dartmouth. They were also suspected of piracy and their examinations revealed inconsistencies which suggest the mayor had been right to question them. The company of thirteen included Nicholas Shere of Plymouth, Nicholas Norracott of Dartmouth, Thomas Martin of Salcombe, Andrew Duloe, a Frenchman, Simon Croote of Totnes, John Allen of Frome in Somerset, Arthur Halse of Plymstock, James Chamberlain of Plymouth, Pascoe Westcoat of Stonehouse, Anthony Orenge of Stonehouse, Nathaniel Babb and William Carey of either Stonehouse or Truro. They had set sail in a small vessel of some six tons from Salcombe in April 1613 and three days later entered Dartmouth aboard the *Cod Fish*, a Flemish ship en route to Bristol with a cargo of hemp, madder and flax. Although most of the men agreed that they had originally intended to fish for rays in the Isles of Scilly and sell them in Brittany, they admitted that they had neglected to bring any nets, lines or hooks with them. Chamberlain claimed to have been onboard merely to sail to France where he had wanted to sell six pounds of tobacco and Arthur Halse’s stated purpose was to travel in order to learn the French language.

However, when the mayor examined two sailors from Zeeland they revealed they had been robbed and held below deck for three days (with the only exception being allowed to come on deck ‘to ease themselves’) before finally being set free in Dartmouth. None of the English ‘fishermen’ could explain why they had stopped the Flemish vessel and boarded her ‘having ciphers over their faces’, and with drawn swords, nor could they satisfactorily clarify why they seized the ship and took the cargo.<sup>101</sup>

The course of religious change in Dartmouth was much like that in other Devon market towns. One early indication of popular sentiment took place on 28 October 1537 when Emelima Petyfen cried out in the port ‘the devil take the king and his lady both’.<sup>102</sup> She was referring to Henry VIII but was unlikely to have known that the king’s third wife, Jane Seymour, had died four days

<sup>96</sup> M. S. Guiseppi (ed.), *Calendar of the manuscripts of the most Hon. the Marquis of Salisbury* (London, 1933), XVI, p. 128. In 1631 another mayor also observed Dartmouth was ‘much resorted unto by strangers’: TNA, SP16/186/27.

<sup>97</sup> Roberts, *Calendar*, IV, p. 598.

<sup>98</sup> TNA, SP12/266/1.

<sup>99</sup> TNA, SP14/107/70 & 74 & SP14/108/60.

<sup>100</sup> DHC, DD61843.

<sup>101</sup> DHC, DD61829.

<sup>102</sup> Russell, *Dartmouth*, p. 92; James Gairdner & R. H. Brodie (eds), *Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic, Henry VIII* (London, 1896), Vol. 15, item 34; John P. D. Cooper, *Propaganda and the Tudor State: Political Culture in the Westcountry* (Oxford, 2003), p. 95.

earlier. Dartmouth's records noted the course of the Reformation with the disposal of holy relics to the employment of puritan preachers.<sup>103</sup> By the early 1600s there was a substantial puritan element which would have pleased the 'Pilgrims' aboard the *Mayflower* when they visited in 1620. In 1642, at the outbreak of the Civil War, the town supported parliament and that autumn the mayor was appointed the port's military governor by Westminster. Dartmouth fell to the Royalists in October 1643 and it was not until January 1646 that Parliament recaptured it.<sup>104</sup>

It could be indicative of the town's support for Parliament that it took part in the colonisation of Ireland. The events of the Irish Rebellion in 1641, one of the issues which led to civil war the following year, would have been well known in Dartmouth. In March 1642 parliament passed the Adventurers' Act, in which Irish land was sold to private individuals, and Dartmouth Corporation arranged for sixty-three men and women to contribute some £2,397 for more than 3,291 acres.<sup>105</sup> This was part of the wider transfer of Catholic land ownership from 1641 to 1688 when the Protestant share increased from 41 to 78 per cent of all Ireland.<sup>106</sup>



**Plate 2.** Detail from a map of Dartmouth, early 1600s, depicting the Church of St Saviour, the Fosse and the Salt Mills.

<sup>103</sup> Watkin, *Dartmouth*, pp. 322, 325, 313.

<sup>104</sup> Russell, *Dartmouth*, pp. 109–19; Eugene A. Andriette, *Devon and Exeter in the Civil War* (Newton Abbot, 1971), pp. 159–60; Mark Stoye, *Loyalty & Locality* (Exeter, 1995), pp. 45–8, 197–200.

<sup>105</sup> Russell, *Dartmouth*, p. 109; David Brown, *Empire and Enterprise* (Manchester, 2020), 73–4; DHC, DD62700a-b. In 1642 the corporation sanctioned a fourth payment of £2,668 7s 6d: DHC, DD62712. The land was calculated in terms of English acreage.

<sup>106</sup> Russell, *Dartmouth*, p. 109; Karl S. Bottigeimer, 'English Money and Irish Land: the Adventurers in the Cromwellian Settlement of Ireland', *Journal of British Studies* 1 (Nov. 1967), 12–27.

## Jurisdictions

Dartmouth had a tangled character of legal and fiscal jurisdictions which has left a rich archival legacy relating to character of local taxation. In 1341 the Crown granted a charter to the borough of Clifton-Dartmouth-Hardness and the geographical bounds were extended in 1463 with the annexation of Southtown ‘that they may keep watch at a certain place called Gallion’s Bower to guard against our enemies’. The corporation had the right to elect a mayor who by 1500 was assisted by two bailiffs, twelve burgesses and a town clerk. As early as 1590 the councillors referred to themselves as ‘the brethren’<sup>107</sup> but like other places, local politics in Dartmouth were not always brotherly. In 1625 ‘confusion and disorder’ in the council prompted new procedures for the election of the mayor. It was claimed that in the past ‘sundry factions and sects’ had been ‘nourished and maintained within the borough’. The corporation experienced ‘certain factious spirits who being never contented with any order in government but with such as suiteth with their humours’. It was agreed that the mayor and his twelve ‘masters’ (otherwise councillors) would nominate two ‘free burgesses’ (otherwise freeman) to stand for election as mayor. Thirty-seven freemen, along with the bailiffs and some other men, would then vote for the two candidates along with those to be elected for other offices.<sup>108</sup>

Between 1500 and 1650 the borough vied for control of various different types of jurisdictions with five manorial lords, the Duchy of Cornwall, Torre Abbey, the Admiralty and the Diocese of Exeter. There were risks of confrontation as happened with the visit of an Admiralty official in 1558. When John Reynolds arrived he felt that the borough had infringed the Admiralty’s rights and was angered when the mayor contradicted him regarding what he asserted were traditional liberties. Tempers flared, Reynolds called the mayor a knave and was arrested. While being taken to gaol Reynolds plucked the mayor’s cap from his head and declared ‘thou shall not wear a cap and I to go bare-head’.<sup>109</sup> The dispute between the corporation and the Admiralty continued for years.<sup>110</sup>

The De Bryan family held the lordship of the manor of Clifton-Dartmouth-Hardness until about 1400 when it appears to have lapsed or at least ownership became murky. A descendant of the family made an unsuccessful claim nearly two hundred years later<sup>111</sup> and in 1620 the corporation purchased the manorial rights.<sup>112</sup>

Townstal, Southtown, Clifton and Norton Dawney were Dartmouth’s four other manors. In 1545 Nicholas Adams of Dartmouth acquired the manor of Townstal from Torre Abbey.<sup>113</sup> The Seale family later owned the manor of Southtown.<sup>114</sup> The manor of Clifton was held by the Carew family and subsequently by the Southcote family from about 1589 to 1670.<sup>115</sup> The manor of Norton Dawney, which lies on the borough’s northern edge in the parish of Townstal, was by 1346 held by the Courtenay family and afterwards, from 1539, by the Crown. The corporation held Town Park in the manor.<sup>116</sup>

<sup>107</sup> Edward Windeatt, ‘The borough of Clifton-Dartmouth-Hardness and its mayors and mayoralities’, *DAT* 43 (1911), 124; Watkin, *Dartmouth*, p. 155; DHC, DD61461, p. 92.

<sup>108</sup> DHC, DD62208.

<sup>109</sup> DHC, DD61415.

<sup>110</sup> DHC, DD61420.

<sup>111</sup> DHC, 4088/Box 1/58.

<sup>112</sup> Russell, *Dartmouth*, pp. 31–2.

<sup>113</sup> Joyce Youings, *Devon Monastic Lands*, DCRS NS1 (1955), pp. 68–70; Russell, *Dartmouth*, pp. 28–9.

<sup>114</sup> DHC, 4088/Box 1/58, 902M/M/1 & 3353M/M/1; Suffolk Archives (Bury St Edmunds), 449/1/E3/15.51/1.5–8, 1.10–13, 1.15, 1.17–18, 1.20–24 & 449/1/E3/15.51/1.2–4; *White’s Directory* (Sheffield, 1850), p. 486.

<sup>115</sup> Maxwell Adams, ‘The castle, manor-house and church of Clifton, near Dartmouth’, *DAT* 32 (1900), 503–4; Suffolk Archives (Bury St Edmunds), 449/1/E3/15.51/1.5–8, 1.10–13, 1.15, 1.17–18, 1.20–24 & 449/1/E3/15.51/1.2–4.

<sup>116</sup> Watkins, *Dartmouth*, p. 274; Russell, *Dartmouth*, pp. 29–30; DHC, CR/532; TNA, SC6/HENVII/1096 & 1098; TNA, SC6/HENVIII/523-33; DHC, DD61838.

The rights of the river, port and waters of Dartmouth have been owned by the Duchy of Cornwall since the 1330s following a visit by Edward I in 1285. A water bailiff appointed by the Duke of Cornwall, or by the crown when holding the Duchy collected Port dues, but the borough leased the office from 1511 through to 1860. The rights had to be periodically renegotiated. During these years the corporation had the maritime jurisdiction of the Dart and the coastline westward to Salcombe and eastward into Torbay.<sup>117</sup>

The corporation held regular water bailiff courts, from 1584 there was one in the spring and another in the autumn,<sup>118</sup> in which men were prosecuted for maritime misdemeanours. From 1500 to 1650 men were prosecuted for throwing ballast out of their ships, allowing rubble to be cast from the quarries sited along the river, using fishing nets without permission and creating public nuisances in creating docks (or pits) in the mud along the shore. The borough licensed the use of fishing seines: in 1577 twelve nets brought in £3 14s 4d, the equivalent of more than £760 today. Of considerable practical use was the borough's ability to control petty customs.<sup>119</sup>

By 1500 Dartmouth had been sending members to parliament for just over two hundred years. In the first half of the sixteenth century one of the two was normally a resident of the port and during the early years of Elizabeth's reign the Earl of Bedford, lord lieutenant of Devon, dominated the elections. His death in 1589 left a vacuum in the following decades and the selection of candidates became closely controlled by the mayor and his council: six representatives (John Upton, Thomas Holland, Thomas Gourney, William Nyell, Roger Mathew, William Plumleigh) served in the seven parliaments of 1604–10, 1614, 1621, 1624, 1625, 1626 and 1628–9. They were all local men and, with the exception of Upton, were merchants who had served the borough as mayors, receivers or town clerks. Nyell had represented the borough at the assizes in Exeter and had kept the water bailiwick court.<sup>120</sup> In 1626 sixty men voted for three candidates who vied for the two places. One had forty-nine 'voices' while the others had forty and twenty-seven (Appendix 3).<sup>121</sup>

The town had three parishes which extended some two miles across the landscape. In about 1198 Torre Abbey built St Clement's Church at the crest of the hill at Townstal. The abbey remained its patron until 1539 and the abbot, Simon Rede, became the vicar a few months before the Dissolution. He remained at Townstal until his death sixteen years later. When in 1545 the manor was acquired by Nicholas Adams of Dartmouth the rectorial rights were retained by the Crown. Forty-one years later they were acquired by Thomas Plumleighe, Robert Smythe, John Smythe and John Follett the younger, four Dartmouth merchants, in part for an annual fee of £6 13s 4d to the Crown. The four feoffees also agreed to pay £13 6s 8d for the Townstal vicar's pension and £5 to the St Saviour chaplain for his stipend. The initial part of a further fee was to be given between one and four in the afternoon on 1 November 1587 at Chaucer's Tomb in Westminster Abbey. The borough retained the rights for 250.<sup>122</sup> The corporation had sub-leased with the stipulation that the licensee would pay the crown's fee, the rector's pension and repair the chancel.<sup>123</sup>

<sup>117</sup> Russell, *Dartmouth*, pp. 7, 56–7; DHC, DD61895 & DD61899.

<sup>118</sup> DHC, DD61461, 14 May 1584.

<sup>119</sup> DHC, DD61429, DD61877, DD62096 & DD61454.

<sup>120</sup> P. W. Hasler, 'Dartmouth' in Hasler (ed.), *The History of Parliament: the House of Commons, 1558–1603* (London, 1981), I, p. 145; George Yerby & Paul Hunneyball, 'Dartmouth' in Andrew Thrush & John P. Ferris (eds), *The History of Parliament: the House of Commons, 1604–1629* (Woodbridge, 2010), II, pp. 93–4; DHC, DD61903.

<sup>121</sup> DHC, 3889M/Box 7.

<sup>122</sup> Youings, *Devon Monastic Lands*, pp. 68–70, 130; Russell, *Dartmouth*, pp. 28–9, 93; DHC, R9/1-0/Z/2. The rights were in the possession of Robert Petre and had been held by Edmund Downyng and Peter Aishton from a grant of 1581.

<sup>123</sup> DHC, DD61461, 1 March 1591.

A chapel, which was to become St Saviour's Church, was built below St Clement's Church in the town but ecclesiastical rivalries delayed its consecration until 1344. Townstal remained the mother church and the borough agreed in 1395 to pay the salary of the cleric at St Saviour.<sup>124</sup> As noted above, from 1587 the borough became the patron of both Townstal and St Saviour.<sup>125</sup>

The third church, that dedicated to St Petrox, is situated adjacent to the castle at the mouth of the Dart and a mile from the town. It is the oldest of the three churches. The church was recorded in 1192 and rebuilt between 1636 and 1641. Until 1822 the patron of St Petrox was the rector of nearby Stoke Fleming.<sup>126</sup>

For the organisation of poor rates the parishes were referred to as Townstal (St Clement), Southtown (St Petrox) and Northtown (St Saviour).<sup>127</sup> Rate-paying could be problematical. In 1610 ninety-seven parishioners of St Saviour refused to pay their poor rates and the mayor instructed the churchwardens and overseers of the poor to distrain the recalcitrants' goods (Appendix 2). An average of 160 individuals, or 16 per cent of the general population of about 2,577 people, contributed to the Dartmouth poor rates edited in this volume; of these men and women there were on average 130 ratepayers in St Petrox, 187 in St Saviour and 132 in Townstal. They were 17, 14 and 26 per cent of their respective populations.

By 1393 two churchwardens administered funds for St Saviour and a century later there were another two wardens who looked after property bequeathed for obits for the chantry chapel in the church. The principal wardens raised the church's maintenance costs and the salaries of the priests and other clerics through donations, Sunday collections particularly one at Michaelmas, the rental of church property, the selling of pardons, houseling money (an Easter fee), seat rentals, the sale of candles and fees for burials and the ringing of bells. The highest sum came from property rentals. One means of raising income may have been peculiar to Dartmouth: ship's masters occasionally paid to moor their ships against the wall of the churchyard.

After the Reformation the number of wardens was reduced by half. Their descriptions evolved: in 1542 they were either the 'warden of the stores of the high altar and St Mary' or the 'warden of the chantry'. The following year they were termed the 'receiver of the monies of the high store and the blessed Virgin Mary and of certain lands appertaining to the said town' or the 'receiver of certain lands there'. A year later their names were simplified: they were the 'receivers of certain lands and tenements appertaining to the town aforesaid'. The complication for the wardens, and thus the corporation, was that properties given to support 'superstitious uses', that is outlawed Roman Catholic practices, were required to be handed over to the Crown but the borough retained or recovered possession of all those properties which had been previously administered by the churchwardens. Following the Reformation the wardens continued to raise money through charges for seats, fees for burials and rentals of property.<sup>128</sup> Individuals also gave property for charitable purposes.<sup>129</sup> In 1586 the rights to the tithes were purchased<sup>130</sup> and it was from this source that the wages of the clerics were paid. In the early 1600s the combined salaries for the clergy of the two churches of St Clement and St Saviour was £26 13s 4d. An additional fee was paid for recording baptisms, marriages and burials.<sup>131</sup>

The arrangement for paying clerical salaries was repeatedly questioned. In 1613 the crown's auditor noted that the rectorial tithes were being charged and cited the agreement made in 1395

<sup>124</sup> DHC, DD61837.

<sup>125</sup> Watkins, *Dartmouth*, pp. 278–80; Russell, *Dartmouth*, pp. 28–30, 38–9.

<sup>126</sup> Adams, 'The castle', pp. 510–14.

<sup>127</sup> Russell, *Dartmouth*, pp. 28–30, 38–9.

<sup>128</sup> Watkins, *Dartmouth*, pp. 294–301, 304; Russell, *Dartmouth*, p. 94.

<sup>129</sup> *The report of the commissioners concerning charities containing that part which relates to the county of Devon* (Exeter, 1826), I, p. 27.

<sup>130</sup> DHC, R9/1-0/Z/2.

<sup>131</sup> DHC, DD61670, DD61675 & DD61809. By 1610 the salary was raised to £40 per year: DD661783.

between the borough and Torre Abbey clarifying its responsibility. James Altham determined that there were seventy-three years of back payments, totalling £365 (the equivalent of some £50,000 today), since the Reformation. The case was settled two years later.<sup>132</sup>

The corporation paid the Crown an annual fee of £14 13s 4d for the rights to tithes and although there were complications with the collection, particularly during the Civil War, in 1647 they brought in £145 6s. The assessments were based on land holdings but in 1637 eight men also paid a sum for their boats.<sup>133</sup>

Church rates were not issued in Dartmouth. The three churches were partly maintained by feoffees, the trustees who looked after property generally for charitable purposes. They were in place at Townstal in 1560 and utilised income from land holdings to repair the nave of St Clement's Church whereas the corporation maintained the chancel. Feoffees were also established in St Petrox from at least the fifteenth century and were concerned with the water supply. St Saviour's feoffees were operating since at least 1576.<sup>134</sup> In 1599 the town's feoffees outlined their income was intended to maintain the church of St Saviour, the poor and local defences.<sup>135</sup>

Dartmouth residents paid other rates which were not collected on every Devonian; this included the half penny paid by shipowners on the tonnage of ships which helped pay for the lighthouse built in Cornwall in the early 1620s.<sup>136</sup> Merchants were regularly required to pay towards other causes such as the naval fleet for North Africa in 1619<sup>137</sup> and in about 1570 contributions, probably voluntary and possibly loans, were made by over one hundred men and women to build the new quay.<sup>138</sup>

Each of Dartmouth's three parishes had two collectors for the poor rate but the number of overseers of the poor varied between two and four men. The rates themselves were signed by men acting in various capacities; some poor rates were even signed by waywardens.

#### Dartmouth's documents

The Dartmouth documents in this volume are part of the corporation's main collection, which number more than 8,000 items. They were first investigated, and partially listed, by the Historical Manuscripts Commission which published a report in 1875.<sup>139</sup> The HMC had been established six years earlier to identify records and papers held outside the Public Record Office in Chancery Lane, London. From 1879 to 1880 Stuart A. Moore of the Public Record Office calendared the archive in Dartmouth. His bound calendar is housed with the collection at the Devon Heritage Centre. Moore had, in the mid-1860s, completed the same task in relation to Exeter's records; he had 'turned chaos into cosmos'. Moore subsequently worked on the papers of the Dean & Chapter and six years after that task finished he began work in Dartmouth.

In 1879 the mayor admitted that Moore's 'inspection was due to the hostility of the late vicar but out of evil often came good'. The cleric had disputed the council's liability for repairs at St Saviour's Church.<sup>140</sup> Moore pointed out in 1880 that there was a good survival rate of documents but that there was a glaring lack of ancient correspondence. The papers were placed in two presses and Moore expressed the hope that after any consultation the documents would be replaced in sequential order.<sup>141</sup>

<sup>132</sup> DHC, DD61837, DD61798, DD61809, DD61815-6, DD61853-7, DD61859-60, DD61867-8.

<sup>133</sup> DHC, DD62672 & DD62671. For the payments in arrears see DD62670, DD62742, DD62727, DD62676.

<sup>134</sup> DHC, 1163/F/T/1; *The charities in the county of Devon* (London, 1839), I, pp. 35-40; DHC, DD61444.

<sup>135</sup> DHC, DD61626,

<sup>136</sup> TNA, SP14/152/110.

<sup>137</sup> DHC, DD61940 edited in Gray, *Early-Stuart Mariners*, pp. 103-5.

<sup>138</sup> DHC, DD61434.

<sup>139</sup> *Fifth Report of the Royal Commission on Historical Manuscripts, Part 1* (London, 1876), pp. 597-606.

<sup>140</sup> *Exeter & Plymouth Gazette*, 1 Aug. 1873; *Exeter Flying Post*, 12 Feb. 1868, 12 Nov. 1879; *Western Times*, 13 Oct. 1868.

<sup>141</sup> DHC, Stuart A. Moore, A calendar of the archives of the borough of Dartmouth, Introduction.

The former gaol was converted to serve as a muniments office in 1898 but subsequently the papers were said to have descended into an ‘indescribable condition’. By 1910 there was disquiet amongst council officers on the manuscripts’ condition; it was alleged that papers had an inch and a half of mildew. The next year Mr R. A. Roberts of the Public Record Office visited Dartmouth to advise on the care of the archive. Some papers were placed in a safe in the guildhall parlour<sup>142</sup> and there was discussion about cleaning; a fine rubber or pieces of bread were suggested as the most effective means to remove the ‘beastly’ dust and dirt.<sup>143</sup>

The council subsequently sent its collection to Exeter Library which had appropriate storage. Librarian H. Tapley Soper, who was also Honorary Secretary of the Devon & Cornwall Record Society, was then gathering documents from across the county. These became the core of a collection which would evolve into the Devon Record Office (now Devon Heritage Centre). Soper listed some documents because of a possibility they may have been returned to Dartmouth.<sup>144</sup> However, the papers remained in Exeter with the exception of six years of the Second World War when they, along with nearly all of the other records in the library, were removed for their safety.

A fourth individual also listed the collection. Hugh R. Watkin, president of the Devonshire Association in 1918 and council member of the Devon & Cornwall Record Society from 1915 to 1937, began work in September 1925 and it was then noted ‘the work is expected to occupy a considerable time’. The documents ‘had been got ready’ by two women, Miss Northmore and Miss Sybil Davies. Ten years later the Devonshire Association published his analysis of the pre-Reformation records but his second and third volumes were uncompleted at the time of his death in 1937. Watkin stated ‘where possible every parchment and paper has been transcribed and the contents embodied in a précis’.<sup>145</sup> His work included recovering a collection of some sixty early deeds which were recorded in 1875 but had been loaned to a private gentleman in 1913.<sup>146</sup> After Watkin’s death, and by 1950, each précis was typed at Exeter City Library and bound into eighteen volumes. They serve as the only catalogue.<sup>147</sup>

The collection has been organised in at least three separate periods. At some point each document was stamped ‘Corporation of Dartmouth’ often in purple ink. In the 1870s Moore stamped each cover page with a four-digit numeral taken from his catalogue. These are in black ink. Subsequently a second series of markings were made in red ink. These were presumably applied by Soper, Northmore, Davies or a combination of the three in Exeter Library. In the top left corner of the same page the year of the document was written and in some instances this was followed by a pair of Arabic and Roman numerals to note the day and month on which the document began. Below this a second or third individual wrote, also in red ink, a five-digit reference number mostly preceded by ‘DD’ (which stood for Deeds & Documents). An unknown person or persons also wrote the year of each document in pencil and these were later nearly entirely erased. A few documents have a short descriptive note which had been written in red ink. Most documents also have an original description, made in black ink at the time by the scribe, which includes the year. These were sometimes written in Latin.

Ancillary documents occasionally provide significant details which reveal the background to the tax lists. These have normally been utilised, when identified, for the notes preceding each document. A church court case of 1561 for two parishes in this volume, Crediton and Sandford,

<sup>142</sup> *Dartmouth & South Hams Chronicle*, 12 Aug. 1910, 3 March 1911 & 28 April 1911; Watkin, *Dartmouth*, iii; *Western Morning News*, 7 Feb. 1925.

<sup>143</sup> *Dartmouth & South Hams Chronicle*, 6 Oct. 1911.

<sup>144</sup> *Dartmouth & South Hams Chronicle*, 7 July 1911; *Express & Echo*, 5 June 1939; *Western Times*, 7 July 1939; DHC, bound volume of Soper’s Dartmouth précis for DD6501-3.

<sup>145</sup> *Exeter & Plymouth Gazette*, 18 Sept. 1925; *Western Morning News*, 16 Sept. 1925; Watkin, *Dartmouth*; *Western Times*, 19 Nov. 1937.

<sup>146</sup> *Western Morning News*, 12 March 1927.

<sup>147</sup> *Western Morning News*, 18 Nov. 1937; *The Cornishman*, 2 Nov. 1950.

details local variations which were otherwise not recorded. That year parishioners disputed the custom of paying their tithe of hay. They argued that grass was first made into a pook from which 10 per cent was extracted for the cleric or his representative and immediately removed from the meadow ground. Eight men testified as to the legally binding traditions within their own prebends. In doing so they revealed an awareness of the history of their local tax obligations to Crediton Church which went back to the 1530s when a previous chancellor had unsuccessfully attempted to change the custom.<sup>148</sup> Their evidence also disclosed how local frameworks could differ not merely across parishes but within them.

<sup>148</sup> DHC, Chanter 855A/100-105.

## EDITORIAL CONVENTIONS

The spelling of first names has generally been modernised except in ambiguous cases or when they were written in abbreviated forms. Place names appear as in the originals and modern spellings have been given in square brackets generally in the first instance. These have been derived from the English Place Name Society's two volumes on Devon, ordnance survey maps and mid-nineteenth-century tithe apportionments. Some lists included field names such as 'Blackman's Combe', noted in Item 54, which later became known as Blackmoor Combe and was recorded as early as 1333.<sup>1</sup> Population estimates for 1642 have been derived from the formula in which the number of male parishioners who signed the Protestation Oath is multiplied by 1.66 and then doubled.<sup>2</sup>

Parish church rates in the diocesan collection were, at some point, possibly in the early seventeenth century, organised with a number system. These figures have been retained in the rates' editing. The use of bold for lettering has also been kept and Latin words have usually been translated and placed in italics. Summaries have been provided for some lengthy Latin texts. The physical construction of the edited manuscripts is described differently from volumes One and Two in this series. It became apparent that record offices house nearly all of the surviving examples of locally made thread and string. These were used in stitching paper to construct booklets. The editing of Claude Passavant's eighteenth-century Exeter cloth book<sup>3</sup> made me aware of the otherwise rare survival of this material although their modern equivalents do not seem to match what may be better termed 'stread' or 'thring'.

Some scribes used crosses or tally marks to note the payment of contributions. These have been retained. Other scribes noted reasons for non-payment including 'left', 'gone', 'away', 'runaway', 'too much', 'not able', 'poor', 'drowned' and 'dead'. These have also been retained. All words which were crossed through have been identified as such in the text.

### Abbreviations

<i>DAT</i>	<i>Devonshire Association Transactions</i>
DCNQ	<i>Devon &amp; Cornwall Notes &amp; Queries</i>
DCRS	Devon & Cornwall Record Society
DHC	Devon Heritage Centre
KK	Kresen Kernow
NDRO	North Devon Record Office
PA	Plymouth Archives
TNA	The National Archives

<sup>1</sup> J. E. B. Gover, A. Mawer & F. M. Stenton, *The Place-Names of Devon* (Cambridge, 1932), p. 413.

<sup>2</sup> Nigel Goose & Andrew Hinde, 'Estimating local population sizes at fixed points in time', *Local Population Studies* 77 (1977), 83.

<sup>3</sup> Todd Gray (ed.), *The Exeter Cloth Dispatch Book, 1763–1765*, DCRS NS63 (2012).