

Newsletter

No.2

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Welcome to the second CCHT e-newsletter intended to keep you up-to-date with the VCH Cumbria project. If you would like to contribute to a future issue, please send material to Sarah Rose, the Volunteer Co-ordinator.

CCHT Annual General Meeting

The first AGM of the Cumbria County History Trust was held on 19 November 2011 at the Rheged Centre near Penrith. A recurring theme of the meeting was how far we have come in those twelve months. Some thirty members confirmed Bryan Gray as Chair, Richard Brockington as Secretary, and elected John Garside as Treasurer, replacing Rob Matthews who had decided to stand down.

Research Progress

Angus Winchester, Project Director, expanded on the experiences of the last year and hopes for the next. There has been good progress by the first groups of volunteers, who have not only completed putting the Census data on the website (1801-2001), but are now working on the first township articles. Briefing notes for drafters have been written and posted to the website, and the decision had been taken to use as our base the 311 Civil Parishes as at 1900. Angus emphasised how demanding the VCH style is – it is not a “normal” local history, but essentially is an encyclopaedia entry.

Other Perspectives

Angus was followed by two speakers who looked at the Cumbria VCH from their own perspective. First, David Bowcock, Assistant Cumbria County Archivist, spoke of the Lowther Archive and its potential role in contributing to the VCH. Then Margaret Gowling gave us insight into the role of the Volunteer Team Leader in working on a township history, specifically with regard to Brough-under-Stainmore. She referred to the need to take the long view, from Rome to the Twentieth Century, which meant delving into unfamiliar areas and periods. She referred to problems in accessing scattered resources, and to the special skills needed, in reading, understanding and interpreting original documents. She also spoke of the hard work involved – but reminded us of the wise old saying, “it’s better to wear out than to rust out”.

Bill Shannon

VCH Rededication

At the CCHT AGM, Angus Winchester announced the rededication of the Victoria County History to celebrate the present Queen's Jubilee in 2012 – though it will continue to be called the VCH, not the ECH!

To mark the occasion, a research project is being planned for 2012 which will build on the excellent progress that VCH Volunteers have already made. The aim is to produce a set of historical data, known as "Jubilee Digests", for every parish/township for which a separate VCH article will eventually be written.

Training Day Success

The first, experimental training day for volunteers took place at Petteril Bank, Carlisle, on 6 December 2011. Michael Winstanley gave expert tuition on the use of Excel in the morning, and Sarah Rose demonstrated a variety of online catalogues in the afternoon.

Fifteen participants attended, and comments about the day included "very good", "very informative", "very helpful", "useful" and "enjoyable". There was a strong preference for having two sessions on the same day, and this is a pattern we are likely to repeat. Most respondents felt the day met their training needs, although more reinforcement of how to use Excel is a common theme of the feedback. The CCHT is grateful to the Cumbria Archives Service for helping the trust set up the day, and for the use of their facilities.

The external funding for the training has now been confirmed and it is hoped to arrange further sessions in the new year that will build on this initial success, having first considered the detailed feedback and discussed how best to shape the next stages to the objectives of the project and the needs of our volunteers.

Marion McClintock, Coordinator of training

Work on the Dacre Inheritance 1569-1602

The period between the death of George 5th Baron Dacre in May 1569 and the Howard repurchase of the baronies of Burgh, Greystoke and Gilsland from the Crown in December 1601 is likely to cause difficulty to any VCH volunteer researching any township in those baronies *or any other township owned by, or containing land owned by, the Dacres of the North in 1569*. I am trying to clarify the main sequences of events, and would like to hear from any volunteer, whose research is likely to be affected by this issue. I shall be revisiting TNA in January, after which I hope to be able to post the main conclusions on the CCHT website - but it is already clear that there will be numerous exceptional cases.

Richard Brockington

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A TRIP TO THE ARCHIVES.....

Visiting The National Archives

I went to TNA at Kew in late November. I was staying in central London. The journey by underground, changing to the District Line (Richmond) at South Kensington, took about 50 minutes. From Kew station it's a 10 minute walk. If you go by car, there's a large free car park but you can't leave the car there overnight. Opening time is 9am Tuesday-Saturday, late closing (7pm) Tuesday, Thursday.

It took me about 45 minutes to complete the arrival processes. First, you will probably need to register for a Reader's Ticket on the second floor (if you already have a Ticket, check the expiry date before your trip). To get a Reader's Ticket you must bring two forms of identity with you, to prove both your name and address. Leave your coat and bags in the cloakroom on the ground floor, which is free and the lockers easy to use. You can take a camera (no charge) and a laptop but everything must be contained in one of their transparent carrier bags (from cloakroom). Take pencils without rubbers, and spare batteries and cards for your camera. On the first floor there is a Talks Room where the 'New to Kew' talk is held daily at 11:30 for first-time visitors.

Prepare meticulously: have a precise list of the documents you wish to see and their catalogue references; and study the excellent on-line research guides in relation to the types of record. You will probably be based in the Map and Large Document room on the second floor. Ordering documents is simple, from dedicated terminals – just swipe your Reader's Ticket and enter the document reference, and you will be given the short description and can press the order button. You will be given a seat number which you should write down (used when collecting your order). The limit is three documents at a time, and the waiting time is likely to be up to 40 minutes, so get into the habit of ordering the next document immediately after returning one. Each item comes with a yellow card which must be returned with the item. Some items are heavy: there are large tables outside the collection room for use if necessary. Camera stands are plentiful.

The staff at the inquiry desks are helpful, but you may have to wait, and sometimes you will need to talk to a specialist for your period or type of record. Good cafeteria on ground floor.

Richard Brockington (in consultation with Bill Shannon)

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