

Local History on Your Doorstep

A project to develop Bishop's Castle Heritage Resource Centre as a Local History Centre

Newsletter August 2010

We are now going in to the last couple of months of the Local History Centre project at BCHRC, and this is to bring you up to date with what has been happening. As well as information on the progress of the project, **don't miss the following items on pages 3 and 4 of this newsletter:**

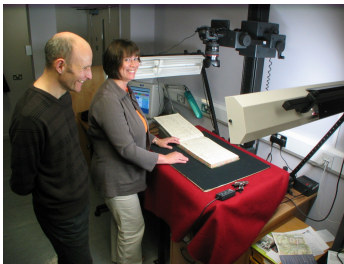
- **Information on training for running BCHRC as a Local History Centre**
- **Your invitation to the launch of the Local History Centre**
- **Details of your chance to feed back your experience of the project (and be fed at the same time!)**

So, how are we getting on?

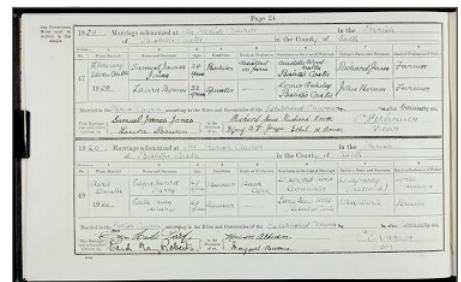
Because we had rather a slow start at the beginning of the project, partly due to the snowy weather and partly due to delays in getting the digitisation process started, we have had an extension from HLF, and are now finishing working on the project at the end of September.

Our dedicated team of volunteers is continuing to take digital photographs of parish registers and other material at Shropshire Archives, and has made amazing progress. At the last count, on 19 July, 14,385 out of 19,000+ pages had been photographed, and of these 13,590 had been processed into pdfs.

Some of the documents are too large or too fragile for our volunteers to handle. These are being photographed by Shropshire Archives' Reprographics Officer, and our volunteers are processing the images into linked pdfs. At the end of the process we will have a CD for each parish in our catchment area with pdfs of the registers, tithe maps and apportionments, and some other documents such as vestry minutes. We already have a CD of Bishop's Castle registers etc, and you are welcome to look at this at BCHRC at any time. Just send me an email or call 630556 if you want advice on loading the CD and viewing it.



Photographing at Shropshire Archives ... and at BCHRC



Marriage register 1920 – 1929
P33/A/3/7 © Shropshire Archives

General register 1672 - 1697
P33/A/1/3 © Shropshire Archives



The skills that have been learnt at Shropshire Archives are also being put to good use at BCHRC, where items from the House on Crutches collection and other documents are being photographed.

As well as images of parish registers and so on, we are also gathering a wide range of other information that will help us to answer visitors' local history enquiries, or signpost them to where they are likely to find the answer. Among these are photocopies of the Estate catalogues for the Powis, More, Walcot and Garnett-Botfield Estates. These are a fascinating resource, and the lists themselves contain a lot of information even without viewing the actual documents. In order for us to have these valuable lists, first all of the relevant 2189 pages were identified from the many volumes of Estate catalogues at Shropshire Archives, and then they were photocopied. And then they were all filed! Well done those volunteers!

Lists of education holdings and Roman Catholic and non-conformist registers have also been typed up from Shropshire Archives' catalogues, and all of this material, plus more that will be described below, is gradually being indexed, so that we will have a full list of all our resources. As you can imagine this is a big job, and any offers of help would be much appreciated.....

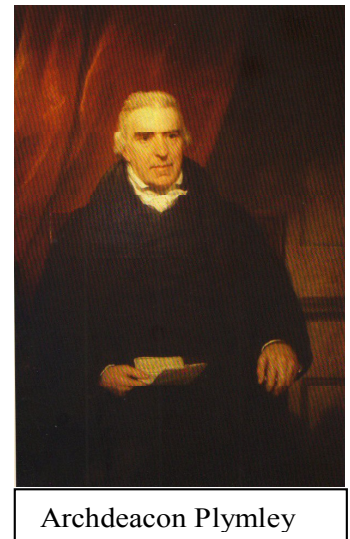
What other resources have we got?

We have considerably extended our reference library and have now got a really useful selection of books ranging from general local history to specific Shropshire titles. Do have a look and enjoy browsing through them next time you are at BCHRC!

We have bought all the relevant "Documents Concerning.." booklets (formerly known as Parish Packs), and will soon take delivery of all the census returns for the parishes from Shropshire Archives.

It was always part of our plans to bring both of the above resources to BCHRC, but as the project has gone along other items have been added to our wish-list. One exciting addition is a transcription of the relevant parts of Archdeacon Plymley's visitation to South Shropshire in the 1790s. This document gives detailed information on the parishes including numbers of households and names of householders, manors, enclosures, apprentices, poor rates, and a wealth of other information. For example, during his visitation to Bishop's Castle Archdeacon Plymley noted that "There are no alehouses in this Parish out of the Borough, their number therein is fifteen". Those were the days!

Transcribing this information is a real labour of love, and it is not realistic to expect it to be finished before the end of 2010, but the five parishes that have been completed so far are a pleasure to read, and can be found in a folder on the open access shelves at BCHRC. The folder also contains photographs of some pages from the original, which give a true flavour of the document.



Greenwood
map of Salop
1827

A question raised at the Archive Evaluation Panel prompted an audit of the maps at BCHRC, and we were both surprised to find how extensive our collection was and pleased to have the opportunity to fill the gaps. As well as purchasing some of the "missing" OS maps and a CD of the 1827 Greenwood map of Shropshire, we are buying paper copies of field maps in our area that we don't already have, plus digital copies of all of them.

Together with our digitised tithe maps, these will be invaluable for researchers.

A look at the open access material on our shelves led to a discussion about how to make this accessible to anyone coming in to BCHRC. So information found in answers to research queries, interesting snippets, pictures, photocopies of documents etc have all been put into A – Z folders, and are being systematically entered onto a card index, so that the information can be shared with everyone. Another new folder on the shelves has lists of land tax assessments (1829, 1887 – 88) and land tax papers (1759 – 1911) held at Shropshire Archives, photographs of hearth tax records (1672), window tax records (1735) and a research guide and article on land taxes levied following the Finance Act 1909 – 1910.

We are often asked about the Bishop's Castle Railway, and now, as well as the books that have been written on it, we have a list of the holdings at Shropshire Archives on this subject.

Old photographs always hold a fascination and give valuable information to researchers and Shropshire Archives have a vast array of these, which are being catalogued and copied by their own volunteers. It is outside the scope of the current project to acquire digital copies of many of these, but a small selection has been listed and copies of some of these will be added to our resources.



Bishop's Castle Railway Station
© Bishop's Castle Railway Society

What's been happening behind the scenes?

The Archive Evaluation Panel and Steering Group have both continued to meet regularly and have done a great job at keeping the project on track and on budget. Meetings at Shropshire Archives have also been very useful for making sure we are all working together towards the same aim.

So, what's next?

This is where it gets really interesting!

We will be launching BCHRC as a Local History Centre on 25 September....

....**and you are all invited to join us.** We will be open from 4pm to 8pm and you are welcome to drop in at any time to see the displays and the resources we have gathered together during the project (and have a bite to eat and a drink!) The official opening will be at 6pm, and we are hoping that Mary McKenzie, County Archivist will do the honours.

How is it actually going to work?

We plan to open from 10.30am – 1pm on Saturday mornings starting on Saturday 2 October. This time will coincide with the (slightly adjusted) Family History Group opening times, and will mean that we will have someone at BCHRC who can answer local history questions alongside someone with family history knowledge.

A number of volunteers have already identified themselves as willing to staff the centre when we open, and **training will be delivered by Mary McKenzie into running a Local History Centre.** Training sessions will be about two hours and Mary has offered a number of dates she is available.

We need to book Mary for some definite dates, so I would be grateful if **you are interested in staffing the Local History Centre (or even if you just want to find out more about what would be involved)** if you could let me know your availability for the dates on the following page. So I can choose the dates that are most convenient for most people, please rank the dates, with your preferred date as number 1, second choice as number 2 etc:

Day	Time	Score (1 st choice 1, 2 nd choice 2 etc)
Monday 20 September	Morning	
Tuesday 21 September	Morning	
Thursday 23 September	Afternoon	
Tuesday 28 September	Morning	
Tuesday 28 September	Afternoon	
Wednesday 29 September	Morning	
Wednesday 29 September	Afternoon	

I will select the two dates that are most popular – one in the week running up to the launch on 25 September and one in the week after, so please let me know as soon as possible by emailing mail@bchrc.co.uk or leaving a message at BCHRC or on 01588 630556.

We are also keen to have your feedback on the project and how it has been run.

Malcolm Redgrave and Rob Webster (Education Officer with the National Trust) would like to hear from you about your experience of the project. ***They are inviting you to join them on Tuesday 7 September at BCHRC for a light lunch and a chance to share your views on the project, informally and in confidence.*** This is your chance to give your frank views on the project in an informal way and to suggest how we could improve future projects. All comments will be passed to the Steering Group and will feed into the final report to HLF, and will be strictly non-attributable.

If you can't make 7 September, you can still let Malcolm and Rob know your views and suggestions in one of three ways:

Fill in the attached questionnaire and return it to BCHRC, Chapel Yard, Bishop's Castle SY9 5DE

Email your comments to mredgrave@btinternet.com or rob.webster@nationaltrust.org.uk

Let us know if you would prefer to meet them on Wednesday 1 September instead

It would be good to know how many people to expect on 7 September so that we can cater for the right number, so do please email mail@bchrc.co.uk if you would like to come, or let us know if you would prefer to chat to Malcolm and Rob on 1 September instead.

This newsletter comes with a big ***Thank You*** to all our volunteers, whether you have been involved in the new project, or simply (!?) working away keeping BCHRC going. Without all of you there would be no BCHRC to develop into a Local History Centre.

Prue Dakin
Bishop's Castle Heritage Resource Centre

***Local History on Your Doorstep
A project to develop Bishop's
Castle Heritage Resource
Centre
as a Local History Centre***



Supported by
The National Lottery[®]
through the Heritage Lottery Fund

