

Barnstaple

Barnstaple is located within North Devon local authority area. Historically it formed part of Braunton Hundred. It falls within Barnstaple Deanery for ecclesiastical purposes. The Deaneries are used to arrange the typescript Church Notes of B.F.Cresswell which are held in the Westcountry Studies Library.

The population was 3748 in 1801 9698 in 1901. Figures for other years are available on the local studies website. In the valuation of 1334 it was assessed at £18/04/00. The lay subsidy of 1524 valued the community at £38/06/02. In 1641/2 731 adult males signed the Protestation returns. It is recorded as a borough from 1018 and was incorporated in 1557. It had parliamentary representation from 1295-1885. A turnpike was established in 1763. The community had a grammar school from 1646. Incorporated Newport 1885. A market is recorded from 14c.-1985.

A parish history file is held in Barnstaple Library. You can look for other material on the community by using the place search on the main local studies database. Further historical information is also available on the Genuki website.

Maps

The image below is of the Barnstaple area on Donn's one inch to the mile survey of 1765.



- On the County Series Ordnance Survey mapping the area is to be found on 1:2,500 sheet 13/2,3,6,7
- Six inch (1:10560) sheet 13NW,NE
- The National Grid reference for the centre of the area is SS556333
- On the post 1945 National Grid Ordnance Survey mapping the sheets are:
 - Six inch to a mile (1:10,000) sheet SS53SW & SE
 - Explorer (1:25,000) mapping sheet 139
 - Landranger (1:50,000) mapping sheet 180
- Geological sheet 293 also covers the area

Illustrations

The image below is of Barnstaple (SC0068) as included in the Library's illustrations collection. Other images can be searched for on the local studies catalogue.



Barnstaple, by George Townsend, c.1860. (Somers Cocks 0068-1 - a later version of a plate where the station has been added over the image of a man ploughing)

Extract from: Tugwell, George, M.A., Oxon. The North-Devon scenery-book. London: Simpkin, Marshall, & Co.; Ilfracombe: J. Banfield, 1863. (2nd edn.) pp.233-4.

Barnstaple and Umberleigh

The capital of North Devon is a quiet and clean-looking country-town. Having said which, it does not occur to me that I have anything else to say on the subject. Barnstaple indeed presents the fewest possible attractions to the ordinary traveller. It boasts a Mayor and Corporation - which is not a remarkable circumstance, and it owns two or three Churches, which are in no ways noteworthy; and it is said by its inhabitants to be an extremely bracing and healthy place of residence, which is not an interesting statement to a man who resides elsewhere. As a matter of fact, the traveller remembers it solely for its being the terminus of that most deliberate of railways which has brought him from South to North Devon, or will convey him southward with no haste and less speed.

Still, however, the neighbourhood is not without a quiet beauty of its own, and the position of the town on the broad tidal waters of the Taw redeems it from entire dulness and insipidity.

Extract from Devon by W.G.Hoskins (1954), included by kind permission of the copyright holder:

Barnstaple at the head of the Taw estuary, has been the most considerable town in North Devon since Saxon times. It is a lively and cheerful place with good shops and markets.

It began life, like Bideford, as a small settlement where the river estuary narrowed to a fordable width. This ford was probably marked by a *stapo*, or post" Bearda's staple or post."

Pilton, on a defensible hill to the NW., was the original *burh* in the early 10th century, but the *burh* was transferred later in the same century to Barnstaple, which was constituted as a market town and a borough, and given a mint. The earliest known Barnstaple coins date from 979-1016, and we may date the emergence of the borough from shortly before this. There is no authority for the statement that Athelstan gave Barnstaple its first charter in 930.

In 1086, Barnstaple was one of the four Domesday boroughs of Devon. It belonged to the King, and had belonged to Edward the Confessor before him. It is not clear whether a castle existed here at this date. The fact that there were thirty-eight houses "laidwaste" suggests that one had been built, although the erection of the castle is generally attributed to Juhel of Totnes who received the manor in Henry I's time. (R.H., 416) Nothing remains of this castle today except the mount, sixty ft. high and forty ft. across at the top. It is possible that the earthworks dated from the Conqueror's reign, and that Juhel of Totnes was the first to substitute stone for the original timber defences. Barnstaple appears to have been walled around early in the 12th century for a charter of Henry I's time speaks of land "outside the walls between the north gate and the east gate," and a description of the north and west gates of the town, demolished in 1842 and 1852 respectively, clearly suggests Norman work. The town walls were "almost clean fallen" in Leland's day, but the four gateways remained to be demolished in later times.

Barnstaple was of considerable economic importance throughout medieval times. In the early 14th century it was the third town in Devon, Exeter and Plymouth being the two richest, and this position it has maintained until recent times, except for a short period from about 1680 to 1730 when Bideford surpassed it as a port. Its great annual fair, which now begins on the Wednesday before 20 September and continues for three days, is of immemorial antiquity. This fair, always the largest in North Devon, used to begin on the eve of the Nativity of the Virgin Mary (8 Sept.) and last for five days. In Lysons's day it began on 19 September (the ancient date, if we allow for the eleven days added to the calendar in 1752). For centuries the chronology of North Devon has revolved around "Barnstaple Fair," but like all these events it is now largely a commercialised pleasure fair. There were also two weekly markets, which still go on Tuesdays and Fridays for vegetables and other farm produce, Fridays only for corn and cattle.

Not only was the town the largest market in North Devon, unshakably rooted in the local countryside, but it had a considerable woollen industry for several centuries, and consequently a valuable overseas trade. A merchant guild the guild of St. Nicholas - appeared at a very early date. Barnstaple was the most considerable textile centre outside Exeter, and it remained so until the rise of the New Draperies about 1600. During the 17th to 18th centuries it ceased to be a woollen manufacturing town, and became instead the principal landing place for Irish wool

and yarn which was carried overland to the manufacturing towns of east and mid-Devon. The sands and mud of the Taw, however, gradually blocked the harbour. Even in Risdon's day "it hardly beareth small vessels," and its foreign trade gradually passed to Bideford where the more powerful tidal currents of the Torridge see how they race in and out today - kept the deep-water channel clear. The Barnstaple merchants were still considerable enough in Queen Anne's day, however, to rebuild the Exchange (1708-3) which still stands, an open portico known as Queen Anne's Walk, on what used to be the town quay. The colonnade was rebuilt by the corporation in 1798.

By Lysons's day only the coasting trade remained, but some revival of foreign trade took place after 1822, when bonded warehouses were established here. The directory for 1890 speaks of trade with the Baltic, France, Spain, Portugal and North America, as well as an extensive coasting trade. There is still a small coasting and overseas trade, and Barnstaple ranks as a Customs port.

Although Barnstaple was not incorporated until 1557, it has enjoyed the right to elect its own mayor from a much earlier time. (Gribble, *Memorials of Barnstaple*, 197, 371). The borough was chartered in 1154-8 by Henry II, who granted Barnstaple the customs of London, but the earliest known mayor occurs in 1303. The borough also regularly sent two members to parliament from 1295 until it was disfranchised in 1885. (For an account, inadequate in some respects, of Barnstaple members down to 1832 see D.A. 71 (1939), 249-65; D.A. 72 (1940), 251-64; and D.A. 73 (1941), 181-94)

Barnstaple grew fairly rapidly in the early 19th century, especially from 1821 to 1851, a period which has left its mark upon the architecture of the town. Comparative stagnation in the second half of the century was followed by steady growth after 1901, so that it is now a lively town of some 16,000 people, the undisputed capital of North Devon. Behind the stuccoed middle-class terraces of the early 19th century are the narrower streets and lanes of colour-washed cottages, mostly of 18th century date. Of the pleasant 1830-ish building, Union Terrace is a good example, though the best is to be found at Newport, a suburb to the SE. on the Exeter road. Here Newport Terrace, South Street, and Trafalgar Lawn are all noteworthy. Newport originated as a "new town" about the year 1295 when the bishop of Exeter obtained the grant of a market for it, and set it up almost at the gates of Barnstaple as a rival to the older centre. It never came to much, however, and is now incorporated as part of the borough of Barnstaple; but it contains more old building (16th to 18th century) than the latter has managed to retain. Of the other early 19th century building in Barnstaple itself, Bridge Buildings (at the N. end of the bridge), probably designed by a pupil of Soane; the Market Hall (1854); and Salem Almshouses (in Trinity Street), built in 1834, all merit attention. The Guildhall (1826-8), in the Grecian style, contains thirty portraits of prominent 18th century citizens, painted by Thomas Hudson in 1738-40. (D.A. 16 (1884), 157-9) Some other portraits are now hung at the Castle. Much of the work was done by Hudson's pupils and is conventional.

Of the churches of the town, the parish church (St. Peter) is the most ancient. The nave, chancel, and tower represent the church dedicated in 1318 by Bishop Stapeldon, though some of the masonry is older than this and is probably 13th century. The N. and S. aisles are said to have been added c. 1670,¹ but presumably replaced older aisles. The lead-covered broach spire, which has twisted with the heat of the sun, is perhaps the best of its kind in this country. The whole church was heavily Victorianised by Sir Gilbert Scott in 1866-82, who left it dark and dull. It contains a great number of interesting mural monuments with sculptured figures, mostly of 17th century date, the S. aisle monuments being especially good. Those in the S. chancel aisle are placed too high to see in this dim church; a pity, for taken as a whole the church monuments make a good gallery of 17th century merchants and their wives.

Holy Trinity church, originally built in 1847 (Mackintosh, architect), has a very handsome tower in the Somerset style, but the rest of the church had to be rebuilt in 1868 because of bad foundations and is dull. St. Mary Magdalene was built in 1844-6 by Benjamin Ferrey.

Barnstaple is fairly rich in almshouses as might be expected in a town of former commercial importance. Most notable are the Penrose Almshouses (1627) in Litchdon Street, a group of twenty dwellings around a charming courtyard, with a granite-columned cloister (somewhat similar to that at Moreton Hampstead) along the street frontage. Horwood's Almshouses (c. 1650-60) in Church Lane, founded by Thomas Horwood, merchant, stand beside the maids' school founded by his wife Alice Horwood in 1659, making a good group. Paige's Almshouses were founded in 1656. These almshouses, the monuments in the church, and the richly decorated plaster ceilings to be seen in various buildings in the town, leave us in no doubt that the 17th century saw Barnstaple's greatest and most prosperous days.

Many of the remarkable 17th century ceilings, which were the work of a Barnstaple school of plasterers similar to those who worked at Totnes and Dartmouth in South Devon, have been removed or destroyed, but the Westminster Bank (formerly the Golden Lion Hotel) retains two good examples, that in the Banking Hall (dated 1620) being exceptionally fine. In Cross Street, No.8 retains one good example.

St. Anne's chapel, near the parish church, is an early 14th century building. It was endowed as a chantry in 1459, and suffered the fate of all chantries in 1547. It was afterwards (until 1908) used as a grammar school. John Gay the poet and dramatist (1685-1732), who was born at what is now No. 35 High Street and is Barnstaple's most well-known son, was educated here. So, too, was Sir John Doddridge, solicitor-general to James I. John Jewel and Thomas Harding, those great theological antagonists in later life, are also said to have had their schooling in this building in pre-Reformation days. On Sundays from 1685 to 1785 the room was used as a place of worship for Huguenots. It is now a museum.

Barnstaple bridge, of sixteen pointed arches and 700 ft. long, was first built in the late 13th century. The present bridge was built about 1437, but has been

considerably reconstructed, widened, and altered, and does not compare in beauty and interest with Bideford bridge. Nevertheless, it retains a good deal of medieval work. (D.A. 70 (1938), 190-7) Barnstaple has long been known as Barum, probably from the contracted Latinised form of name.

Extract from The glove is up! Devon's historic fairs, by Tricia Gerrish, by kind permission of the author

ORIGINAL CHARTER: It is widely believed that King Athelstan chartered the first fair in AD 955 (not part of his reign!) a four day fair 'to be holden at the festival of St Mary Magdalen': 22nd July. 1000 year celebrations took place in 1955.

A GLOVE FAIR

Barnstaple - or Barum - Fair was often referred to as the saturnalia of North Devon, and has its own song, which appeared in The Cave, part of the old North Devon Magazine. It has many verses, and the chorus runs as follows:

'Then sing of Barum, merry town and Barum's merry mayor too
I know no place in a'l the world old Barum to compare to'.

The old charter, given by King Athelstan to this ancient borough, is said to have been accidentally lost. There is confirmation of the fair's existence in 1154; a deed given to Barnstaple dated between 1160 and 1180 lists donations made from its tolls. The charter's replacement by Edward I c.1295 was followed by the granting of an additional charter in 1556, for a three day fair at the feast of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary (7th-9th September). This included a court of Pie Powder, or Pied Poudre. The fairs tolls were claimed in 1565 by Sir John Chichester, and included a pleasure fair on The Quay.

By James I's reign, the September date had changed to St Giles Day, on 1st September and under the new calendar became 19th September, lasting for three days. This is how Magna Britannia lists it, though by 1890 Kellys Directory says it is held on the 1st Wednesday preceding 20th September.

Other fairs appear in an 1840 Devon directory: on Fridays in March, April, July and December, for the sale of cattle. It is St Giles Fair which has assumed major importance. In the early 20th century it was stated that the fair had only been prohibited three times during its long history: during the English Civil War, the Great Plague, and in the year 1832, when Devon experienced a major cholera epidemic. Day One was traditionally for sales of sheep and horned cattle, with Day Two being set aside for horse sales. Business in horses was good even in the 17th century. Borough records show that in 1629, 39 changed hands at an average price of £2.9.8 each. By 1647, 46 were sold and the cost had risen to £4.3.4. The final day was given to pleasure and amusements. It was a massive event. In 1824, 1440 bullocks were driven in, of which less than 300 returned without changing hands. This represented £20,000 worth of business. Not bad progress for a fair which was once held in the churchyard.

In around 1800 cattle were sold in Boutport St, horses in North Walk and the pleasure fair was on The Strand. An 1859 newspaper reports the following locations for selling animals: cattle were in the new market near Cooney Bridge, with the horse fair remaining in North Walk. An above average number were offered that year. In 1858, an action resulted from Barnstaple's horse fair between Messrs Spencer and White. Both were 'jobbers.' Compensation was sought in respect of the warranty of a horse, sold, according to the buyer, as sound. The buyer later found it to be a 'piper' - broken-winded. The seller maintained it was sound when sold, and had been deliberately dosed since. His Honour ruled that compensation: £12.18.6, must be paid.

Cattle were sold in Victoria Road, the horse fair took place on The Quay, and a pleasure fair filled North Walk, by the 1890s. When the song Barnstaple Fair was written, North Walk was described as 'rush and crush where fools stare at horses.' In 1911 cattle sales moved to the market, built in North Walk. Horses were also sold in the Strand. Rides were in Castle Street.

Sheep were still popular in 1932, when about 2000 breeding ewes came to Barnstaple, together with heifers and steers. During World War II the fair was held in an abbreviated form. There were few stalls and rides, but more than 2000 sheep and cattle were sold. Sheep sales are still mentioned at the 1955 fair, when about 1500 were offered for sale in Barum Fair's millennium year.

Barnstaple's St Giles Fair continues to be famous for its many ceremonies today. The Fair opens on Wednesday with its proclamation inside and outside Guildhall, at High Cross, the South end of High Street and Queen Anne's Walk by the Town Clerk. The Senior Beadle, Sergeants at Mace, the Mayor and visiting civic heads process to affirm 'a free fair within the borough' and call upon 'all buyers and sellers to deal justly and pay their dues, stallages...' Then follows the hoisting of a gigantic white glove, flower-garlanded, from the Guildhall top window or gable end (on the West corner of Quay Hall until 1852) in an ancient ceremony.

A glove is known to have existed in 1569, and purchase of a replacement is mentioned in town records in 1615. Four pence (4d) was paid to 'put it out'. A report in the North Devon Journal of 1880, penned by the Senior Beadle, described the current glove. It was eighteen inches long by one foot wide, made of sheepskin leather and stuffed with sawdust. Dahlias and other seasonal flowers, plus a bunch of ribbons, adorned the twelve foot pole on which it was mounted. He regretted that it's condition was dilapidated, and warned the borough's readers that purchase of new one would soon be necessary. In 1984 the latest glove: over one hundred years old, was 'filled with hay and bound together with wrinkled leather.' Layers of thick white paint held it in one piece. A new, modern version was designed and made by North Devon College Creative Arts Department, bringing an ancient custom up to date.

Following the opening ceremonies, a state luncheon took place in the Guildhall, at which traditional items were toast and ale. Nine gallons of ale, brewed to a secret

formula said to originate from Athelstan's day and kept in the Town Clerk's safe, was spiced and mulled, then allowed to soak into the toast. (This lunch now takes place at a local hotel).

Three Elizabethan drinking cups came out for use at the luncheon, together with a bowl and ladle given by Thomas Benson MP in about 1745. Cheese and fairings were part of the menu. The latter, which included sugared almonds and sweetmeats, and gingerbread made to a recipe handed from mother to daughter, were offered round on silver trays. Interestingly, in 1981, when the Borough was trying to cut costs, the huge mayoral get-together (which by now the St Giles Luncheon had become) was a target of cutbacks. £300 could be saved on it, so councillors decided - together with £500 on flowers for the occasion.

Like all the old charter fairs, Barum provided a great deal of pleasure. Too much, if the 'saturnalia' comment is to be believed. There must have been bull baiting in 1622. Records showed a sum of money 'paid for candles to hange by a bull that was not beaten'. In 1859, the pleasure fair, held in The Square, was described as second rate. There were two travelling theatres: including Mrs Weight's Britannia, a waxwork exhibition and some dioramas. These were three-dimensional scenes, with figures. A photographic gallery was present, penny peepshow and Mr Punch. The rides were merry-go-rounds and swingboats. The former converted to steam later in the century, and as rides developed, many came to Barnstaple Fair.

Mr Thornby's confectionery stall is mentioned with great pleasure. Interestingly, he and his wife also featured at Bratton Fleming, Bideford and South Molton fairs. They obviously made a small business of travelling to North Devon's charter fairs. In 1870, the Thornby and Fook standings combined to present fairings to girls from the Union workhouse: to celebrate 40 years of attendance at Barnstaple. Elijah Littlewood also brought his boxing shows, held in The Square.

Early in the 20th century, a newspaper article describes the jollity for visiting country folk: 'ball one night, play the next, and private parties numerous'. This is another line from Barnstaple Fair, the words of whose verses give an excellent picture of some of the excesses of dining, and the activities pursued by fair-time visitors. Beer was specially brewed, and large haunches of beef bought, to ensure hospitality. Boiled and roast beef were on the menu: together with squab (pigeon) pie. Pear pie and 'figgy pudden' followed. Once ten people had sufficed on enough to feed at least twenty, choice fruits, including walnuts brought in from Somerset, were served as dessert. An annual Fair Ball, held on Friday at The Rooms also featured in early 19th century press reports.

Many of the visitors came expecting to hunt 'with hand and horn.' The Doctor, the Squire, Lord and his Lady, Farmers: even the Parson, went a' hunting, often on Button Hill, according to the song. Henry Williamson, in *Life in a Devon Village* described fair days in the 1920s. Booths then included Languid lily (the lady who can't marry) - entry fee 3d to see a quarter ton of solid flesh - and a boxing booth with £2 offered to allcomers who lasted three rounds. He recalled 'brown curled

toffee fairings' at 6d the quarter, and a masked man 'under oath not to open my mouth' who carried a tray of goods of 'great and surprising value', or 'Maisie the American Master Mystic'.

In the 1930s Sam McKeowen promoted boxing at Barnstaple Fair and there was also a male fortune teller called Gypsy Lee. During that decade new robes of office were purchased for the entire council, and worn for the first time to process at the opening of St Giles Fair.

Just prior to World War II, fairground rides were popular: Gallopers, and Golden Dragons and the Venetian Gondolas (both steam driven). There was also a conjuror: the Great Ngai, quack doctors, Potter's ghost (who was Potter?), and midgets and fat ladies galore.

Barum Fair was a great favourite of the travelling showmen, and in its millennium year: 1955, a very unusual ceremony was added to its opening when all the rides and stalls stayed silent for one hour, in memory of showman Henry Charles. Mr Charles, who worked the fairs as a Spinner, had recently died, and such was his respect that nobody broke the hour-long tribute to him. Among that year's attractions were a Jungle ride, Dodgems, a Caterpillar, Jet Ride, and a Helter Skelter.

Barnstaple Fair is still held annually. It is now more a tourist attraction and curiosity than a market fair, but its traditions and ceremonies continue to flourish - along with the song and a suite of music by Nigel Brooks.

Beaford

Beaford is located within Torrington local authority area. Historically it formed part of Shebbear Hundred. It falls within Torrington Deanery for ecclesiastical purposes. The Deaneries are used to arrange the typescript Church Notes of B.F.Cresswell which are held in the Westcountry Studies Library. The population was 516 in 1801 428 in 1901. Figures for other years are available on the local studies website. In 1641/2 82 adult males signed the Protestation returns.

A parish history file is held in Torrington Library. You can look for other material on the community by using the place search on the main local studies database. Further historical information is also available on the Genuki website.

Maps

The image below is of the Beaford area on Donn's one inch to the mile survey of 1765.



- On the County Series Ordnance Survey mapping the area is to be found on 1:2,500 sheet 41/2
- Six inch (1:10560) sheet 41NW
- The National Grid reference for the centre of the area is SS553150
- On the post 1945 National Grid Ordnance Survey mapping the sheets are:
 - Six inch to a mile (1:10,000) sheet SS51NE,SE
 - Explorer (1:25,000) mapping sheet 127
 - Landranger (1:50,000) mapping sheet 180
- Geological sheet 309 also covers the area

Extract from Devon by W.G.Hoskins (1954), included by kind permission of the copyright holder:

Beaford. The church (All Saints) is mainly late 15th century, but much restored and dull. The tower was rebuilt 1910; the font is Norman. Upcott, Warham, and Woodleigh (or Woolleigh) were houses of some consequence in this parish. They are worth visiting for their beautiful surroundings. Woolleigh still contains early 17th century work but has been modernised in an unfortunate way. It was a Saxon estate,

its name meaning "wolves' clearing." There are remains of a 15th century chapel here.

Beaworthy

Beaworthy is located within West Devon local authority area. Historically it formed part of Black Torrington Hundred. It falls within Okehampton Deanery for ecclesiastical purposes. The Deaneries are used to arrange the typescript Church Notes of B.F.Cresswell which are held in the Westcountry Studies Library.

The population was 218 in 1801 246 in 1901. Figures for other years are available on the local studies website. In 1641/2 51 adult males signed the Protestation returns.

A parish history file is held in Holsworthy & Okehampton Library. You can look for other material on the community by using the place search on the main local studies database. Further historical information is also available on the Genuki website.

Maps

The image below is of the Beaworthy area on Donn's one inch to the mile survey of 1765.



- On the County Series Ordnance Survey mapping the area is to be found on 1:2,500 sheet 63/11 Six inch (1:10560) sheet 63SE
- The National Grid reference for the centre of the area is SX461994
- On the post 1945 National Grid Ordnance Survey mapping the sheets are:
 - Six inch to a mile (1:10,000) sheet SX49NE
 - Explorer(1:25,000) mapping sheet 112
 - Landranger (1:50,000) mapping sheet 190
- Geological sheet 323 also covers the area

Extract from Devon by W.G.Hoskins (1954), included by kind permission of the copyright holder:

Beaworthy has a small 14th century church, practically rebuilt in 1871, and of no interest whatever. The S. doorway has small traces of Norman work. The church is the only one in Devon dedicated to St. Alban, the 4th century protomartyr of Britain.

Beer

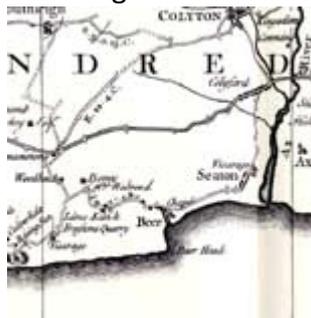
Beer is located within East Devon local authority area. Historically it formed part of Colyton Hundred. It falls within Honiton Deanery for ecclesiastical purposes. The Deaneries are used to arrange the typescript Church Notes of B.F.Cresswell which are held in the Westcountry Studies Library.

The population was 1118 in 1901. Figures for other years are available on the local studies website.

A parish history file is held in Seaton Library. You can look for other material on the community by using the place search on the main local studies database. Further historical information is also available on the Genuki website.

Maps

The image below is of the Beer area on Donn's one inch to the mile survey of 1765.



- On the County Series Ordnance Survey mapping the area is to be found on 1:2,500 sheet 83/15 Six inch (1:10560) sheet 83SE
- The National Grid reference for the centre of the area is SY228894
- On the post 1945 National Grid Ordnance Survey mapping the sheets are:
 - Six inch to a mile (1:10,000) sheet SY28NW
 - Explorer (1:25,000) mapping sheet 029
 - Landranger (1:50,000) mapping sheet 192
- Geological sheet 326 also covers the area

Illustrations

The image below is of Beer as included in the Library's illustrations collection. Other images can be searched for on the local studies catalogue.



Beer Harbour

Extract from Devon by W.G.Hoskins (1954), included by kind permission of the copyright holder:

Beer is an attractive fishing village on a small bay, sheltered by the great chalk cliff of Beer Head (426ft.), the first of the chalk headlands on the English coast as one comes up-Channel. Beer was made a separate civil parish in 1894, and an ecclesiastical parish in 1905, but the church of St. Michael dates from 1877-8. It was built on the site of an older chapel.

The famous Beer quarries lie about $\frac{3}{4}$ m. W. of the village. That to the S. of the lane is the Old Quarry, which was worked intermittently from Roman times to the late 19th century it is entirely underground, and one needs permission and a guide to explore its ramifications. To anyone who is historically minded, this quarry, out of which have come Roman villas and public buildings, cathedrals, parish churches, country houses and cottages, right down to recent times, is one of the most exciting things in Devon. One passes through the dark hole in the rock face into a Roman ante-chamber, in which the tool-marks are still visible on the walls; then on into the Norman quarry, like a cathedral itself with its massive square pillars of stone supporting the roof, and the dark aisles and side-chapels opening on either hand; thence along the great nave, through spaces that produced stone for those chalk-white arcades and carved screens in the Devon country churches, for Exeter cathedral and Rochester castle, for St. Stephen's at Westminster and Exeter Guildhall, and for beautiful Tudor country houses like Bovey not so far away; and finally through choirs and chapels to the blank rock-face where eighteen centuries came to an end in total silence and

darkness. It is a deeply impressive place when one calls to mind what strength and what sunlit beauty have come from its heart over so many centuries.

On the N. side of the lane is the New Quarry, also entirely underground, first opened in 1883 and in extent equal to that of the Old. Most of this stone seems to have been quarried for church restoration work. This quarry is now closed except for the manufacture of lime in the open approaches. Beer village contains much building in the local stone, some used externally in 17th century houses and still good. Bovey House lies NW. of the village beyond another group of old quarries. It came about 1300 to the Walronds (of Bradfield) who continued to own it until a marriage carried it to the Rolles by 1786. The present house, which is most attractive, is mainly of 16th century date (early and late). Further work was done in the 17th century, and some changes were also made about 1719. The house contains some notable 17th century plaster work. After the death of the last Mrs. Walrond (1786) the house was left unoccupied. Both it and the lane leading to it were said to be haunted, with the result that smuggling was successfully carried on here. The house was rescued again in 1868, but reroofed with slate and the walls somewhat cut down.

Jack Rattenbury (b. 1778), one of the most notable of Devon smugglers, was a native of Beer and operated from here. He published late in life his *Memoirs of a Smuggler* (Sidmouth, 1837) when gout had caused him to give up his career, and he ended his days peacefully as a contractor for blue-lias lime for Sidmouth harbour, helped also by a pension of a shilling a week from Lord Rolle.

Beesands

Beesands is located within South Hams local authority area. Historically it formed part of Coleridge Hundred. Hamlet in Stokenham parish.

You can look for other material on the community by using the place search on the main local studies database. Further historical information is also available on the Genuki website.

Maps

The image below is of the Beesands area on Donn's one inch to the mile survey of 1765.



- On the County Series Ordnance Survey mapping the area is to be found on 1:2,500 sheet 137/10 Six inch (1:10560) sheet 137SW
- The National Grid reference for the centre of the area is SX819404
- On the post 1945 National Grid Ordnance Survey mapping the sheets are:
 - Six inch to a mile (1:10,000) sheet SX84SW
 - Outdoor Leisure (1:25,000) mapping sheet 20
 - Landranger (1:50,000) mapping sheet 202
- Geological sheet 355 also covers the area