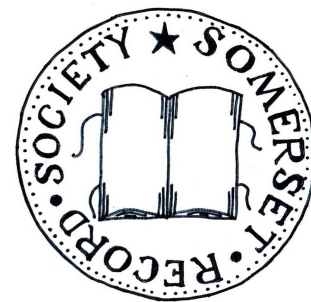


OFF THE RECORD

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE SOMERSET RECORD SOCIETY

ISSUE 1: SUMMER 2019



FROM THE EDITOR

Welcome to the first edition of 'Off The Record', the newsletter of the Somerset Record Society. This newsletter aims to bring you news and updates on the activities of the Society, including forthcoming volumes and events, as well as short articles on records relating to the County from our members.

I hope that you have all received Volume 98 'Handlist of Somerset Probate Inventories and Administrators' Accounts, 1482-1924' by Adrian Webb. It is a rich resource for names and occupations of Somerset individuals from across the social strata, and also provides an insight into the everyday lives of these people. It has also inspired some further research of which there is a summary on the inside pages.

This newsletter also features a new SRS logo. Based on the trade token of George Treagle, Taunton's first bookseller, it is hoped the use of this logo will raise our profile throughout the County and draw public attention to our activities.

I look forward to seeing you at our AGM at Wiveliscombe Community Centre in October.

Emma Down, Editor

FORTHCOMING VOLUMES

We hope that you're enjoying reading Volume 98 'Handlist of Somerset Probate Inventories and Administrators' Accounts, 1482-1924'.

Currently, the Society is working on a number of volumes for future publication. These volumes cover subjects including remedies and recipes, The Commonplace Book of John Walker, manorial court rolls of West Somerset, a Somerset petition of 1641 and an Elizabethan survey.

COPIES OF VOLUMES

Members are reminded that the Society has a number of its volumes which are for sale, and are available from David Bromwich at the Somerset Heritage Centre. A list of available volumes is enclosed in this newsletter.

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

Annual General Meeting

The next Society Annual General Meeting will be held on Saturday 12 October 2019 at Wiveliscombe Community Centre from 2pm. Bob Croft will talk about the history of Wiveliscombe and Robert Dunning will speak about his research on Bishop Drokensford. These talks are open to non-members. The AGM will be followed by tea and cake. The address of the venue is West Street, Wiveliscombe, Somerset, TA4 2JP.

Can members please note that from now on all AGMs will be held on the second Saturday of October.

Council Meeting

The next SRS Council Meeting will be held on Saturday 2nd November in the SANHS room at Taunton Castle at 12 noon.

We are also looking to fill some positions within the society. Positions available are:

- Council Members
- Website manager
- Marketing manager

For more information on these positions please contact William Hancock or Emma Down using the editors' contact details on the back page.



The SRS Council meeting last May

SOMERSET RECORD SOCIETY LOGO

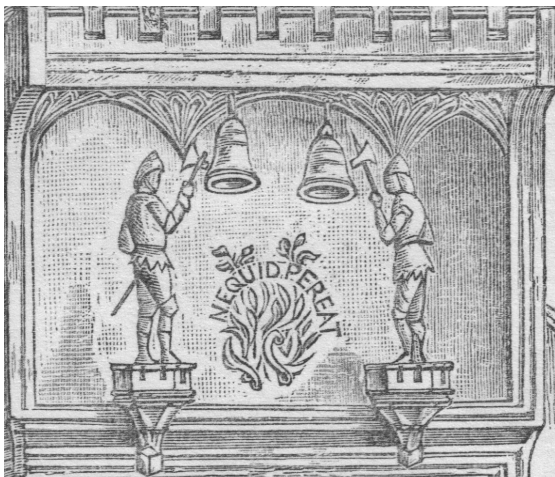
David Bromwich and Adrian Webb tell us about the origins of the motto printed on earlier Society volumes and the new logo which features on the front of this newsletter.

NE QVID PEREAT

This motto was embossed and gilt on the bindings of the first 34 volumes of the society's series, and continued blind without the gilding up to vol. 69. Its derivation is explained in *Wells Cathedral clock*, by F. Neale and A. Lovell (1995): 'Painted on the stonework above [the outside dial of] the clock is the motto NE QVID PEREAT, "Let not anything be lost." This was aptly adopted as the motto of the Somerset Record Society, founded in 1892. It is probably derived from the Gospel of St John, ch. 6 v. 12, and can be taken as a reference both to the precious moments of time ("There's not a moment to lose") and to the equally precious fabric of the Cathedral to which the clock is fixed ("Do not let it decay").' The illustration is from *Wells Cathedral*, by H.E. Reynolds (1881).

This motto will be reinstated on future volumes.

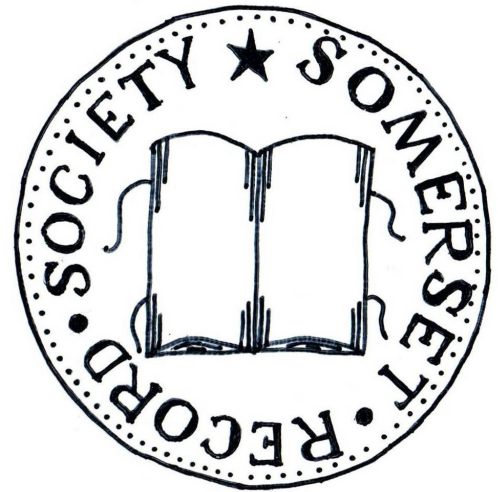
David Bromwich, Treasurer



To try and raise the profile of the society further, I thought to myself that a logo would be a good idea. The question was this – what reflected the activity of a charity interested in publishing books of transcripts of old records relating to Somerset? Several ideas passed through my mind - a quill pen, a map of Somerset, something to do with printing, or books...to name but a few.

Some years ago I started researching the office holders connected with Taunton Castle and their records. One man who was associated with these people was George Treagle, Taunton's first bookseller. During the 1640s and 1650s Treagle was definitely anti-monarchy in his beliefs, as were many of the residents of Taunton. Due to the problems of coinage at that time a whole host of small trade tokens were produced. Fortunately one was produced for George Treagle in the 1660s, which has an open book on it. This book represented his trade as a bookseller.

With a little bit of artistic licence I re-drew Treagle's design. I added the 'Somerset Record Society' wording and used it on a dust jacket design for Volume 98.



Thanks to David Bromwich, members who were at the 2018 AGM were able to see both the dustjacket and the logo, both of which were favourably received.

When the society has its own website it is hoped this new logo can be used alongside the old logo/device that used to appear on our volumes until volume 69 was printed in 1969. The re-use of Treagle's design some 350 years after it was first used, combined with the hope that he will be mentioned in a forthcoming book on a Taunton Chancery case for the Society, is a fitting tribute to the man who may well have been the first printed bookseller in Somerset.

Adrian Webb

ADMINISTRATION OF JOHN SELICK

Inspired by Volume 98, William Hancock has been doing some research into the administration of the estate of John Sellick from Tolland. A summary of his findings is below.

The administration of estates, both testate and intestate, was, in the sixteenth century largely a temporal matter over which the ecclesiastical courts had jurisdiction. The latest SRS volume, prepared by Dr Adrian Webb, introduces the probate process involving inventories and administrators accounts in the diocese of Bath and Wells and provides a handlist of these from 1482 to 1924. The volume includes sample transcripts including that of the final administrators' account for the estate of John Sellick ('John Zellacke') of Tolland. The date of his death is uncertain, but likely to be between 12 July 1574 and spring 1575. His death appears to have been sudden as he did not leave a will. Whilst he appears not to have held land, he was a man of substance with a personal estate worth more than £200. The administration of his assets took thirteen years.

Before the Statutes of Distribution, there were no legislative rules regulating intestate succession to personal property. In general the wife received a third of the chattels, the children had their shares and provision was made for a distribution for pious uses, but the custom varied between districts.

The diocesan court at Wells was the Consistory Court and was responsible for appointing suitable persons to administer John's personal estate. John Sellick left a widow and six children. At the time of his death it seems that his eldest son had not reached maturity (21) which may explain why none of his children were appointed as administrators. Once an inventory of John's estate was complete, the administrators could make provision for his family.

It seems probable that the administration was a long drawn out affair due to the children's ages in 1575, and the death of John junior and his widow, sometime between 1581 and 1585. This explains why payment was made over a number of years.

Eventually, by April 1588 all John's debts and the administration expenses had been paid and allowances made for goods and chattels comprised in the inventories. In addition four of the children had received their portions leaving only the portions of the two youngest daughters. John's administrators were authorised to retain these, perhaps until the age of 21 or earlier marriage.

William Hancock, Honorary Secretary

ORDINATION LISTS

Robert Dunning shares with us some research he has been doing into Ordination Lists.

The editor of the volumes of bishops' registers covering the period 1466-1559 was none other than the retired Deputy Keeper of the Public Records, Sir Henry Maxwell-Lyte, for years a leading figure in the Somerset Record Society. For reasons he never stated he omitted the texts of all surviving lists of men offering themselves for Holy Orders (the years 1466-1526, 1554-9). This dreadful omission is now being rectified.

These ordination lists contain names, often places of origin or current residences of men taking the four grades of Holy Orders – acolyte, sub-deacon, deacon and priest – as secular clergy or religious – monks, canons, brethren or friars. How many names will not be known until indexes are made but will run into several thousand. They offer family names that can be tied to places of origin. Genealogists should take note.

Not all were local, because there was at the time a shortage of ordaining bishops, and men came to Bath & Wells diocese to a succession of active suffragan bishops. In the 1470s, for instance, they came in significant numbers from Llandaff diocese, from neighbouring Exeter, Salisbury and Worcester, and individuals from further afield – York, Coventry & Lichfield, Aberdeen, several sees in Ireland and even from Bayeux and from somewhere that appears as Caru', not yet identified.

The Wells clerks who kept the paperwork each man brought with him, and those who later wrote up the details when they came to compile the final record of each bishop's activities, sometimes had difficulty with unfamiliar names, and sometimes lost concentration when the task became tedious. 'Geoff' ap Gregor' ap gryf' was just about manageable, but Bernard Prawntergist at his first appearance became Prauntergest and Prawntorgyst on subsequent visits (he was a brother of St John's hospital, Bristol). There seemed no difficulty about the description of John Wyppill when made sub-deacon in 1476. The clerk wrote quite clearly that he was a fellow of St Martin's college, Milverton. Is this a new discovery? Unfortunately not, only a serious lapse in concentration. John Wyppill in 1476 was a fellow of Merton college, Oxford. The mystery is why he came as far as Wells for his ordination.

Some ordinands in the 1470s went far in their chosen clerical careers. The young monk Richard Beere, made acolyte and sub-deacon in February 1477/8, became one of Glastonbury's most famous abbots.

Continued over



William Atwater of Cannington, acolyte and sub-deacon in December 1471, became Henry VIII's (? busy) confessor, Dean of the Chapel Royal and Bishop of Lincoln. Richard FitzJames, made deacon in December 1475 when rector of Spettisbury in Dorset, was born at Redlynch and was successively bishop of Rochester, Chichester and London. Names found in later lists include Richard Whiting, made priest in March 1501.

Robert Dunning, Chairman

PARLIAMENTARY PETITIONS 1641-1642

Adrian Webb asks members if they can help with research for a future SRS volume

The Somerset Parliamentary petitions of 1641 and 1642 offer an insight at a local and national level into one of those tumultuous periods in British history.

The volume in preparation is a hybrid mixture of both printed and manuscript petitions relating to Church and State. The plan is to reproduce (in facsimile) four contemporary printed petitions from 1642, two of which are single sheets and the other two are in the form of tracts. The main part of the volume is an edited transcript of a manuscript petition in the Parliamentary Archives from Somerset dated 1641. This document contains some 14,000 names. It is thought to be a fair representation of those who held leanings for King Charles the First and the established Church. It lacks the names of a good number of Puritan supporters.

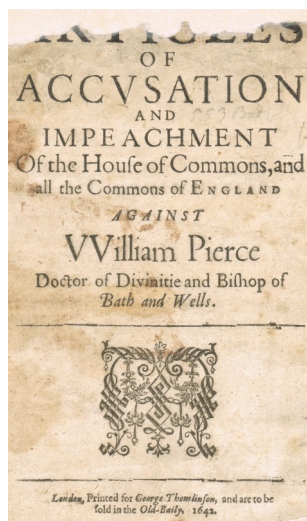
The 1641 petition was first published in 1968 in limited numbers. It is made up of over 200 returns that were thought, in 1968, to represent 221 parishes. Unfortunately the petition does not give the names of the parishes. Recent research using online resources reveals a very different story and is the main reason for bringing out a new edition of this important source.

Part of the problem faced by the editors is arranging all the petitions in the correct chronological order. One of the manuscript petitions from 1642 is not easy to precisely place in its correct chronological sequence. The manuscript in question is addressed to parliament but it does not appear in the journals of either house. It is likely that this petition was drafted but never circulated, possibly due to the failure of previous petitions and the outbreak of hostilities in Somerset in August 1642.

The Somerset Record Society are looking for a specialist who might be able to help with identifying the approximate day and month this petition was compiled, or circulated, some time after July 1642.

The petition in question is addressed: 'To the Right Honourable the Lords and Commons assembled in Parliament. The humble Petition of the Gentry Ministers Freeholders and other Inhabitants of the County of Somerset'. The initial preamble states: 'Sheweth. That we doe most humbly & heartily acknowledge the exceeding great mercy of god to this Nation in preserving you from so many dangerous and wicked plotts & practises Rending you all hearty thanks for your great cares & unwearied paines taken to preserve his Majesties person & kingdoms ...'. The original is held at the Somerset Heritage Centre, reference DD/HI/466. Any information is very welcome. Please send to draj.webb@btinternet.com.

Adrian Webb



The title page from the rare pamphlet detailing the impeachment of Bishop Piers (Author's collection)

NEWSLETTER CONTRIBUTIONS

Over the next few years we would like to develop this newsletter and are always keen to receive articles from members about their research or any interesting items you have found relating to the county's history.

If you would like to contribute an article to the next newsletter please email submissions to the editor at e.down.12@ucl.ac.uk or post contributions to Emma Down, 28 Gale Way, Tiverton, Devon, EX16 5FB.

Articles should be received by 31st March 2020. If you are submitting an image with your article please indicate that you have sought the necessary copyright permission for it to be reproduced.

