

VCH Progress Report

VCH County Editor Philip Riden updates members about research progress over the last six months.

Continuing Research

This autumn members of the Matlock and Chesterfield afternoon groups will continue working on their chosen parishes, while the Wirksworth group will press on with completing histories of the out-townships of Wirksworth parish and return to work on Wirksworth town itself. A considerable amount of text has been drafted for the out-townships and we hope to bring the text on the town up to the same stage. The Chesterfield evening group last year made great efforts to complete outstanding work for the planned hardback volume on the Bolsover area. We hope this year to switch back to work on Chesterfield itself and possibly also Staveley and other parishes adjoining the town, again with the aim of tying up loose ends and getting as much text drafted as possible.

VCH in south Derbyshire

Very regrettably, a decision had to be made last Christmas to bring to an end to the formal meetings of a VCH research group in south Derbyshire, since the small numbers meant that room-hire was no longer cost-effective. We are, however, anxious not to lose the work completed by this group, which to some extent built on the achievements over a hundred years ago of Cecily Wilmot, who had drafted a good deal of text for a volume of Derbyshire VCH on Appletree hundred.

We intend to keep in touch on an individual basis with the members of the south Derbyshire group and get as many parish histories as possible in this area completed.

The Bolsover volume

Over the last twelve months, since the Lottery-funded work which led to the publication of the two paperbacks on Bolsover and Hardwick came to an end, most editorial effort has been concentrated on completing VCH parish histories for Bolsover and the eleven adjoining parishes to be included in the new hardback volume.

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Research Groups Resume

The four continuing Derbyshire VCH research groups will resume meeting at the end of September or early in October.

All these groups are well established and doing good work. We hope existing members will decide to return. Any other trust members who would like to join will be very welcome.

The two Tuesday groups will meet for the first time on 28 September and then fortnightly until 7 December. As in previous years the Matlock group will meet at the County Local Studies Library between 2 and 4, and the Wirksworth group at the Town Hall between 7 and 9.

The Wednesday afternoon group will meet in the local studies section of Chesterfield Library for the first time on 29 September (2–4 p.m.); the evening group at Chesterfield Library will start the following week (6 October, 7–9 p.m.).



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Much of the basic research was done several years ago, in 2002–4, before the Lottery award was received, and much of the work done since September 2009 has been a case of tying up loose ends, filling in gaps, and above all drafting text. We are very grateful to all the volunteer researchers who have helped in this process, which has gone much faster than it would have done had the county editor been working alone.

Most of the text is now in a reasonably final draft. Because VCH text is so dense and detailed, and subject to close editorial control by the central office, there is a much longer process of revision than with, for example, the two Lottery-funded paperbacks. It is therefore harder to say when a VCH hardback is 'finished'. The absolute deadline for the Bolsover book is that it must be ready for the academic year 2012–13, since it has been put into the programme for publication that year. In practice, it would be desirable to have drafts of all the parish histories available for circulation via the Internet well before then, since experience has shown that the more widely the text is made available before formal publication the more likely minor errors will be spotted and also new information, especially for the recent past, will come to light.

We hope, therefore, to mount as much text as possible on the VCH Derbyshire website in the next few months, partly to attract comment, corrections and additions, and partly to show trust members, whose subscriptions have made the work possible, that the book is a reality in the foreseeable future. We will obviously let members know when material does go onto the website. In the meantime, here is a realistic appraisal:

- The text for Bolsover itself was substantially completed in 2004 and needs only slight revision in the light of new discoveries during the Lottery-funded research.
- The four parishes to the north of Bolsover (Barlborough, Whitwell, Clowne and Elmlton and Creswell) are probably 90 per cent complete.
- The two parishes in which the Cavendishes are the main historic owners (Ault Hucknall and Heath) need minor revision from the stage reached when the paperback on Hardwick was completed.
- The other parishes to the south of Bolsover are probably 80 per cent complete in the case of Glapwell, Scarcliffe and Pleasley, and slightly less in the case of Sutton cum Duckmanton.

All the outstanding work should be completed in the coming academic year, after which the book will move to a final stage of fine-tuning and choice of maps and illustrations. The end is genuinely in sight for publication of the first Derbyshire volume since the beginning of the twentieth century!

What is worth adding is that alongside work on these parishes, much has been achieved on the rest of north-east Derbyshire. If momentum can be sustained for a few more years, then a volume on the Chesterfield area, and another on the parishes to the north of Chesterfield (Dronfield, Staveley, Eckington and the smaller places nearby), can also be completed.

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VICTORIA
COUNTY
HISTORY

Derbyshire

News in Brief



Walks success

Our summer walks were again a great success, thanks to generally good weather, help from our volunteers and the energy of our county editor. A representative photograph, from the Whitwell walk, is above. Not only do the walks comprise a pleasant perambulation, but they also help to increase our knowledge 'on the ground' of areas being studied by VCH.

New Treasurer

Cathrin Wharton is our new treasurer and membership secretary. Cathrin, whose contact details appear on this page, takes over from Dudley Fowkes, to whom we owe our thanks.

Website Revamp

There is a new 'VCH Explore' part of the national VCH site at: explore.englishpastforeveryone.org.uk.

The old EPE sites remain, for the time being, accessible from englishpastforeveryone.org.uk/home.

AGM Future

The AGM held at Cromford in June received the usual reports from officers, all being re-elected. Professor John Beckett gave an illustrated explanation of the new VCH Explore website (see above). The meeting was preceded by a presentation from Roz Westwood, County Museums Manager, who spoke about the HLF-funded Enlightenment project in the Derwent Valley Mills World Heritage Site.

The Trust committee feels a change of date from a Saturday to perhaps a weekday evening and making the AGM more of a social event, may help boost attendance. Let us know your views by contacting the Chairman (address opposite).