

Devon Archives and Local Studies Parish Information Page



Hatherleigh

Hatherleigh 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 1218 in 1801 1293 in 1901. Figures for other years are available on the local studies website. The lay subsidy of 1524 valued the community at £14/01/06. In 1641/2 207 adult males signed the Protestation returns. It is recorded as a borough from 1220. A market is recorded from 14c.-1985.

A parish history file is held in 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 Hatherleigh 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 52/10,14
- Six inch (1:10560) sheet 52SW]
- The National Grid reference for the centre of the area is SS542045
- On the post 1945 National Grid Ordnance Survey mapping the sheets are:
 - Six inch to a mile (1:10,000) sheet SS50SW
 - Explorer (1:25,000) mapping sheet 113
 - Landranger (1:50,000) mapping sheet 191
- Geological sheet 324 also covers the area

A fair is known from: 14c.-1935. [It is intended to include the local section from The glove is up! Devon's historic fairs, by Tricia Gerrish, by kind permission of the author].

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

Hatherleigh like so many of the inland market towns of Devon, has been declining in population since the middle of the 19th century. It is a peaceful little place for those who like to absent themselves awhile from the felicities of modern science, for it has not changed much during the past century. The town contains much good domestic building in the local tradition, from the 16th century to the 19th. Some buildings may be older, behind their stucco and roughcast. The attractive George Hotel is probably 1st and early 16th century, and may have been the court-house of the abbots of Tavistock, who held the manor from the late 10th century until the Dissolution. The Old Church House is a medieval building. The London Inn looks pre 16th century in part. The town suffered severely from a great fire about 1840, after which many of the houses were rebuilt and the principal street widened. It was part of the original endowment of Tavistock Abbey, founded about 974 by Ordulf, who had vast estates in North and West Devon. Sometime in the 13th century it was made a borough and given certain modest liberties, including that of having a borough court, but it was never incorporated, and continued to be governed, as it is today, by a portreeve and other officers.

After the Dissolution, the manor and borough of Hatherleigh was sold by the Crown to the Arscotts, a rapidly rising family of gentry in West Devon. It never formed part of the vast block of Tavistock Abbey lands granted to John, Lord Russell, as Lysons surmises. At the beginning of the 19th century Hatherleigh was smaller than most of the old market towns, being in one of the poorest regions of Devon. Its woollen manufacture had also dwindled almost to nothing:

The people are poor as Hatherleigh Moor, And so they have been for ever and ever.

Hatherleigh Moor, formerly a waste of 430 acres, was given to the inhabitants for grazing their cattle and cutting furze for fuel. There is no truth in the tradition that it was the gift of John of Gaunt, who is not known ever to have had any rights in Hatherleigh. It is much more likely to have been a gift of one of the abbots of Tavistock. On the moor is St. John's Well, a "holy well," the water from which was formerly used at baptisms.

Deckport, an Elizabethan house, was the home of John Lethbridge, gent., to whom there is a mural monument in Hatherleigh church (1706). Other houses and farmsteads on ancient sites are Essworthy, Fishleigh, Pulsworthy, Hannaborough, Passaford, Upcott, and Great Velliford. Jasper Mayne (1604-72), chaplain to Charles II, and a dramatist of some note in his early life, was born at Hatherleigh.

Hatherleigh church (St. John the Baptist) is mainly a 15th century building, built of red sandstone and possessing a shingled spire. A few 16th century carved benches remain, and an early 18th century pulpit and altar rails. The war memorial bears many very characteristic West Devon surnames-Battishill, Collacott, Cory, Ellacott, Fishleigh, Meardon, and Medland, all the names of farms (round about, and a reflection of the long stability of country life in these remoter parts.