

WRITING HAMPSHIRE'S HISTORY: THE VICTORIA COUNTY HISTORY, 1899–1914

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ABSTRACT

The recent revival of work on the Victoria County History (VCH) in Hampshire is a good opportunity to look back at the early days of the project, and particularly at the way in which the first series (1899–1914) was something of a guinea pig for the VCH more generally. Using material in the VCH's Central Office archives, together with papers in the Hampshire Record Office, it has been possible to trace the process by which the project was organised in the county, research was undertaken, essays were written and the complete 'set' was published in record time. The particular role of young women, many of them Oxbridge graduates, is highlighted, together with the stresses and strains of working on the manorial histories before an established mechanism had been established. The paper concludes with a brief discussion of earlier previous attempts to revive and update work on the county.

The Victoria County History started life in 1899, and Hampshire was the proverbial guinea pig. The county, according to the preface to volume I, had 'received, perhaps, less attention at the hands of topographers, historians and antiquaries than any other county in England' (VCH 1900, xix; Hicks 1994, 165–75; Clayton 2009, 223–43, drawing attention to the extensive collection of the Rev William Bingley for 1803–4 [HRO, 16M79/6]). It was ripe for research, which may explain why the first of the county committees was set up for Hampshire, the first volume of the entire project, published in 1900, was on Hampshire, the first topographical material to be published (in volume 2) was for Hampshire, and the first county 'set' to be completed was for Hampshire. Playing

this role, the VCH in Hampshire was, perhaps inevitably, a rather hit and miss affair, with the VCH owners in London making up the rules as they went along, but eventually five volumes appeared, in 1900, 1903, 1908, 1911 and 1912, with an index volume in 1914. All the volumes remain in print, and volumes II–V are available in a digital edition (www.british-history.ac.uk). After trials and tribulations, the structure of the VCH was established through the Hampshire 'set', which established the tone for VCH work up to the Second World War.

The VCH was set up in 1899 by the publishing firm of Archibald Constable & Co., following a proposal from Sir Laurence Gomme of the London County Council to H. Arthur Doubleday, one of the firm's directors. They envisaged a national history, written at county level, overseen by a central directorate in London which would operate with local researchers and editors. As Doubleday recognised, 'a scheme which depending for its functioning on inducing local antiquaries and historians to collaborate with an editorial body in London had to overcome not only inter-county jealousies but the natural reluctance of provincial specialists to submit to any sort of control by that body'. It also required finance, and so the plan from the outset was to build an organisation which would bring in funding while 'inspiring with confidence the county archaeologists and others whose local knowledge would be needed to supplement the work of various experts at headquarters' (VCH Archive: H.A. Doubleday memorandum, 7 May 1938).

Doubleday began by appointing a London committee and issuing a prospectus. The

London committee was headed by four dukes, two marquesses, two earls, a viscount, two bishops, two barons, and a roll call of the great and the good which included the President of the Zoological Society, the Chancellors of the universities of Oxford and Cambridge, the Presidents of the Royal Agricultural Society, the Society of Antiquaries, the Royal Society, the Linnean Society, and the Royal Geographical Society, the Regius professors of History at Oxford and Cambridge, the Director of the British Museum, the Keeper of the Public Records, the Director of the Geological Survey, the Director-General of the Ordnance Survey, the Director of the National Portrait Gallery, and the Assistant Secretary of the Society of Antiquaries. This was an imposing list, and by covering half of the sheet of VCH notepaper with their names Doubleday clearly hoped to impress everyone that he approached. He also named them in the prospectus.

With the London committee established, Doubleday turned his attention to recruiting local committees of 'the great landowners and others who were representative of all we needed in each county'. Lords lieutenant were invited to chair their county committees. Securing their services was the work of the Duke of Argyll, who also obtained Queen Victoria's agreement that the project should be dedicated to her. The Earl of Northbrook, as Lord Lieutenant, agreed to chair the Hampshire committee, with H.R.H. Princess Beatrice (Prince Henry of Battenberg) occupying an equal but undefined role alongside of him.

Once the lords lieutenant were on board the leading peers and landowners were invited to serve on the committee. Among those who accepted the offer in Hampshire were the Duke of Wellington, the Earl of Portsmouth, the bishops of Winchester and Southampton, the Dean of Winchester, and the mayors of Andover, Basingstoke, Bournemouth, Christchurch, Lymington, Portsmouth, Southampton, Winchester, Newport and Ryde. The Earl of Portsmouth, signalling his consent to Doubleday, noted that he would like to see any text drafted that had reference to his family or property, and added that he 'would

mention to you that the accuracy of existing published accounts is not to be relied upon.' (VCH Archive 7, envelope A: Lord Portsmouth to Doubleday, 21 April 1899) The committee included ten peers, two bishops, four baronets, and liberal helpings of gentry and clergy, the majority of whom were justices of the peace. Altogether the committee was 89 strong, with 19 of the members representing the Isle of Wight. The Earl of Malmesbury accepted the position of honorary secretary (VCH Archive A30: Earl of Malmesbury to Doubleday, 26 October 1899). The committee members were named in volume 1.

The role of the local committee was mainly ceremonial, although the preference for landed gentry as members was partly to help 'gain access to private collections of MSS'. There was no obvious intention that the committee should promote or initiate work, nor indeed that it should even meet, although the Hampshire committee does seem to have held a meeting on 30 June 1899, at Burlington House, in London (VCH Archive 7, envelope B contains letters of apology from those not able to attend). Next, a prospectus was issued. Doubleday produced general prospectuses for the VCH at regular intervals, but each county also had to have its own project outline. The first Hampshire prospectus was probably issued in May 1899 – it is undated – and it set out how the VCH was intended to 'trace, county by county, the story of England's growth from its pre-historic condition, through the barbarous age, the settlement of alien peoples, and the gradual welding of many races into a nation which is now the greatest on the globe'. This was hardly a low key beginning, and the prospectus continued in similarly upbeat fashion:

All the phases of ecclesiastical history; the changes in land tenure; the records of historic and local families; the history of the social life and sports of the villages and towns; the development of art, science, manufactures and industries – all these factors, which tell of the progress of England from primitive beginnings to large and successful empire, will be so represented as to form a work of absorbing interest to the general reader, and of the greatest value to the student and the

antiquary. Each section will be written by a specialist, with a view to securing the best and most trustworthy results in every department.

Next came 'the general plan of the Contents', which was intended to be standard across the whole VCH. The series was initially expected to run to 160 volumes, a figure subsequently adjusted to 184 to allow for omissions (including the Isle of Wight!). Each county was to have a 'set', usually four volumes written to a chronological framework, from natural history to modern industry and sport, with brief topographical accounts of parishes and manors somewhere in the middle of the contents. Subscription lists were opened on the basis of selling county sets, as well as the whole series, to individual purchasers. Hampshire was initially assigned four volumes, to cost £6 6s for the complete set. The money subscribed was to be used to fund the research and writing of the volumes (HRO 71M89/1: Doubleday to Rev Sumner Wilson, 30 May 1899, enclosing a copy of the prospectus).

To avoid the mistakes of the earlier histories, the intention was that the VCH should be a new history of each county, on a uniform plan, employing professional and other specialists to write general chapters, and locally contracted editor-organisers to identify potential contributors and help to recruit to the county committee. VCH volumes were progressive for the time, laying considerable emphasis on archaeology and economic history, among other newly emerging disciplines, and insisting on records being methodically searched, and on buildings being scientifically examined. Hampshire was quickly up and running according to this plan, although so many changes had to be made in the first few years that only Surrey and, in part, Worcestershire, followed exactly the initially proposed format. A decision was taken by 1904 to concentrate the general material into the first two volumes of each county set, and to reserve the topographical or parish studies for volumes 3 and 4 and, if necessary, subsequent additions to the set.

The first of the VCH Hampshire volumes appeared in 1900. It was edited by Arthur

Doubleday and included what became the standard contents of the first volume in each set, at least prior to the First World War. It began with a long section on natural history, which was followed by early man, Romano-British remains (including a separate article on Silchester), and the Anglo Saxons. Essays on Domesday Book and the Winchester survey were written by the distinguished medievalist John Horace Round, who oversaw Domesday entries across the VCH series. The contributors were a combination of local experts and national specialists in particular fields, among them Professor Francis Haverfield on Romano-British remains, and Reginald Smith who wrote on Anglo-Saxon remains for Hampshire as he was to do for most counties subsequently.

The volume was reviewed in *The Times* on 13 November with somewhat muted enthusiasm. The writer was obviously less than convinced by the format adopted, particularly the space devoted to natural history and to archaeology: 'it is only at the 400th page that we emerge from natural history and archaeology into history proper'. Round's work on Domesday and the Winchester survey turned out to be reviewer's definition of 'proper' because 'we generally judge a county history by its treatment of documents and records, and though in the present volume we have only Mr Round's final chapters to enable us to judge it from this point of view, we may say at once that the promise is high and the standard of treatment adequate and scholarly'. This was hardly a ringing endorsement, and the review concluded that 'we can only say that ... the first volume now issued in no way disappoints the favourable anticipations we founded on the specimen volume previously noticed in these columns' (*The Times*, 13 November 1900).

Volume 2 in the set was published in 1903. It was largely written by the Derbyshire clerical antiquary Rev. Dr J.C. Cox, who covered the ecclesiastical history and religious houses of Hampshire. Additional articles were contributed on education by A.F. Leach, and forestry, including the New Forest. The final 50 pages or so, covering Alton Hundred, were the first topographical entries to be published by the

VCH. The remaining Hampshire topographical entries were published in volumes III and IV (VCHH 1908; 1911). The topography for the Isle of Wight, together with the other general essays on political, social and economic history, agriculture and sport, appeared in volume V (VCHH 1912).

While experts could be employed on a consultancy basis to write the general essays, the topographical material required a different approach. Many years later, and long after he had left the VCH, Doubleday recalled that 'our most troublesome problem was the compiling of the manorial histories'. These entries were usually known as the topographical studies or manorial descents, and the intention was that they should be written parish by parish, and hundred by hundred through the county. But how should they be written? When the VCH was founded there was no model. A small group of experts assembled to make recommendations included the genealogist and publisher W.P.W. Phillimore, but this initiative seems to have fizzled out, and instead J.C. Cox was asked to prepare some models based on Northamptonshire parishes. Cox had written the standard guide to how to write a parish history, published originally in 1879 and already in a fifth edition (Cox 1909). Unfortunately by December 1899 Cox had been delayed so badly by a combination of pressure of work and a bout of the flu, that Doubleday still had no model from which to work. When he talked over the problem with Horace Round and Sir Henry Maxwell-Lyte, both members of the VCH Records Committee, 'we found that very few people were competent for this task, and yet fewer had facilities to undertake it because they were too remote from London where most of the indispensable records were concentrated.' (VCH Archive: Doubleday memorandum 7 May 1938). The competent few had originally been expected to be the local clergy.

By the time this conversation took place, Doubleday was already committed to a local arrangement for Hampshire which at least showed him how not to do the topography. For the VCH to work, it was essential that the new histories were written from original sources to

avoid, in particular, recycling mistakes made by earlier county historians. Doubleday contracted with William John Hardy, and the Rev. George Henniker-Gotley, to be joint editors. Hardy was well known to the VCH as a member of its Records Committee, and as business partner with his brother-in-law William Page in what was believed at the time to be 'the leading firm of Record Agents in London'. He lived in St Albans and could clearly not be the man on the spot in Hampshire. This role fell to Henniker-Gotley, vicar of Empshott near Petersfield from 1897 (VCH Archive: Doubleday to Percy Stone, 5 Dec 1899). Henniker-Gotley's commission was to act as joint editor and to 'exercise a literary supervision over the topographical section'. He was to prepare material for 'that portion of the History which is called the topographical history for the parishes and manors of the county', and to be paid £190 in eight quarterly instalments (VCH Archive 37: Memorandum of Understanding with Rev. G Henniker-Gotley, 7 Dec 1899).

Henniker-Gotley was soon busy recruiting his fellow clergy to work for the VCH cause. He even had his own headed notepaper referring to 'The Victoria History of the Counties of England. The History of Hampshire. Topographical Section.' In August 1900 he told Doubleday that he was 'arranging with Mr Hardy to proceed to the full treatment of the N.E. Hundreds', and the following month he prepared a specimen history and claimed to have signed up 200 subscribers (VCH Archive A54: Henniker-Gotley to Doubleday, 25 Aug, 8, 27 Sept 1900). Three months later, in December 1900 Henniker-Gotley told Francis Jervoise of Herriard Park, Basingstoke, that 'when we get your manor into shape I will arrange a meeting as there are several modern particulars we shall require', and he added the following month that 'we are gradually getting the parishes in N.E. Hants into shape'. Maybe he was going too quickly, since he admitted 'I have however seen so many documents and pedigrees since I saw yours that I should be obliged if you could lend me the Jervoise pedigree for a few days – if with armorial illustrations all the better – to get the 16th to 19th century Herriard succession clear and to throw some sidelights on other

parishes'. He added in a further letter 'I have a great many original documents entrusted to my care and keep them in my safe so you need not be nervous about my care of the pedigree' (HRO 44M69/F18/13–15: G. Henniker-Gotley to F.H.T. Jervoise, 4 Dec 1900, 10, 12 Jan 1901. HRO also has a collection of deeds and other documents, 13th–19th centuries in the Henniker-Gotley collection, 130A06, believed to have been collected in connection with his work for the VCH).

Despite Henniker-Gotley's enthusiasm, his relations with VCH Central Office soon became strained because his energy was not matched by his productivity. On 11 July 1902, Doubleday told Henniker-Gotley that after a discussion with Hardy they had decided to request that he

send the topographical sketch of each parish without attempting to make special search for local records. Mr Hardy will then connect his skeleton of the history to your sketch and if any further local details be wanted I shall look to you to endeavour to procure them. It seems to me therefore from what you say that you can at once supply a large number of the topographical sketches for the hundreds which follow Alton, and if you will kindly send these to me at once Mr Hardy will take parish by parish and unless further local research be absolutely necessary these parishes will be done so far as you are concerned. (VCH Archive 54: Doubleday to Henniker-Gotley, 11 July 1902)

Henniker-Gotley interpreted this as a snub, an attempt to claim his work for the VCH which would turn him from local editor into research assistant – months later he referred to being 'not willing to hand over what I have collected and be shelved personally – which is how I interpreted the request to hand it over en masse'. He asked for more money, but Doubleday would have none of it, claiming that Henniker-Gotley had produced unsatisfactory work 'unless you mean that you must be paid yet again for work you have not done but have already been paid for' (VCH Archive 54: Henniker-Gotley to Doubleday, 18 Sept 1902; Doubleday to Henniker-Gotley, 19 July 1902). Henniker-Gotley clearly felt aggrieved by this treatment and replied immediately to say

that he had to do literary work for money in order to pay his son's school fees at Tonbridge. He claimed to have been available for VCH work for three years, 'but have been hindered by want of cooperation for which I ought not to be penalised'. He asked for payment of £10 per quarter and offered to start work on Odiham Hundred (VCH Archive 54: Henniker-Gotley to Doubleday, 21 July 1902).

There the matter stalled, with Henniker-Gotley demanding more money, and Doubleday refusing to entertain any such thing until he had seen 'the whole of the materials you have collected for the history of Hampshire'. When he was still waiting six weeks later, in September 1902, Doubleday concluded that 'I am forced to the unpleasant conclusion that you have no materials or collections to send me'. Henniker-Gotley responded that 'I made it clear that I am prepared to continue furnishing the local history parish by parish from the Notes I have made and am making, for a quarterly payment that will meet expenses' (VCH Archive 54: Doubleday to Henniker-Gotley, 15 Sept 1902; Henniker-Gotley to Doubleday, 18 Sept 1902). This response infuriated Doubleday:

I am sorry that you should have thought fit to write me a letter such as yours of the 18th inst. I must once more remind you that the materials you have collected have been paid for by the Victoria History and therefore are not your property. I understand that although you have accepted payment for them you decline to hand them over to me. As you seem to have no sense of your obligations in this matter I beg to inform you that unless all the materials you have and the books and documents I have lent you are placed in my hands by October 1st I shall be reluctantly compelled to take unpleasant steps to recover the property of the history. (VCH Archive 54: Doubleday to Henniker-Gotley, 25 Sept 1902)

Doubleday did not spell out what the unpleasant steps would be, and he only partly convinced Henniker-Gotley of his intentions. The injured researcher suggested that they invite a mutual friend to arbitrate between them, but Doubleday was not to be denied, responding immediately to say that

It seems to me that you do not in the least grasp our present relations and the significance of the attitude you have taken up on the question of the work you have done for the History of Hampshire. I wish to point out to you by showing you the progress of our correspondence in this matter how impossible it is to temporise any further. In the first place you must remember that although you had received more than full payment for all the work you have undertaken to do, and you have done very small fraction of it, you informed me you could do no more unless you received further payment. You asked me to consider the whole question carefully and see whether I could not make some management for out of pocket expenses. Up to that point I had seen very little indeed of your work, and I wrote to you on the 11th July asking you to send me the notes you had made for the Hundreds following that of Alton To this moment I have not received one line of material from you.

Doubleday's point was clear enough – if Henniker-Gotley was being paid for his work, that work belonged to the VCH. But now came a further accusation:

Whereas up to 29th July I thought it might be possible to come to some arrangement with you, circumstances have since come to my notice which clearly show me that any further connection with the Victoria History on your part would be undesirable. You must be aware that by making an unjustifiable use of private documents which you have been allowed to examine on behalf of the Victoria History you have seriously compromised me. It is impossible to allow your name to be further associated with the History and I must insist on your sending me at once all the collections you have made for which you have been paid and all the works of reference which were lent to you. (VCH 54, Henniker-Gotley to Doubleday, 29 Sept 1902; Doubleday to Henniker-Gotley, 1 Oct 1902)

For Henniker-Gotley the game was up, and he admitted by return of post that

It was a solitary instance in which I exchanged information between two branches of a family in order to obtain a complete descent for the History. If injudicious it was for no personal

advantage and I shall consider it a great unkindness if it is given to other people as the reason for your terminating my co-operation in the work I hope you will accept all the future help I can give towards the work privately, even if you adhere to your decision not to do so publicly. I will of course return all the books you have lent me to assist in the work and I will also bring some material which Lord Northbrook and Mr Melville Portal have been kind enough to lend, if you will give me an acknowledgement of it. My own notes and memoranda will require sorting and transcribing to be useable by anyone else and this will take three or four weeks to do without the aid of the reference books I sincerely regret that you wish me to stop when my cooperation with Mr Hardy's readiness would have facilitated rapid progress. (VCH 54, Henniker-Gotley to Doubleday, 3 Oct 1902)

Doubleday did not reply and when the second Hampshire VCH volume appeared in 1903 Hardy alone was named as editor of the Alton Hundred material, which had been 'compiled by W.J. Hardy F.S.A.'. The editorial note to the volume hinted at the turmoil in the VCH Central Office: 'as the history of this county was the first in the series of which it forms a part the scheme for the whole undertaking has had to be developed in the course of the preparation of the present volume'. (VCHH 1903, xiii) This was bland compared to what followed. Henniker-Gotley's connection with the VCH, the note continued, had been 'severed before any portion of the topography of Alton Hundred was completed', and that 'with the exception of a few local investigations the present volume does not contain any contributions by Rev. G.H. Gotley, who was originally appointed joint topographical editor with Mr W.J. Hardy' (VCH Archive A7, envelope A: Doubleday to Stone, 5 Dec 1899; VCHH 1903, xiii). Perhaps chastened by the experience, Henniker-Gotley moved to Haywards Heath in 1909, where he was still the vicar in 1940. (HRO 13A06, Henniker-Gotley Collection. The catalogue introduction says that George Henniker-Gotley was 'co-editor of volumes 3 and 4 of the VCH for Hampshire', but there is nothing in either volume to suggest he contributed to them.)

Hardy was said to have been the compiler of the Alton topography, but what did this mean? As a partner in a record agency, Hardy was well acquainted with the public records held in the Public Record Office (PRO) in Chancery Lane. He, or Constable & Co. must have employed one or more workers to go through the lists and indexes searching for Hampshire material relating to manorial descents which was then written out on individual slips of paper. Hardy may initially have thought that he would write up the descents but for one reason or another this turned out not to be practical, and in March 1902 he contracted for the work with Miss Constance Mary Toulmin (1880–1970) who, like him, lived in St Albans. She started work in on Alton and Odiham Hundreds, under the supervision of Hardy, who initially provided her with the individual slips of paper and agreed to fund assistance for her in sorting them out. She was expected 'to draft out rough 'skeletons' of the descents of the chief manors'. Miss Toulmin complained that the PRO references were not fit for task, and she told Doubleday that 'a great deal of special searching in original records is needful in the case of many of the manors'. She could not do the special searching, and the manorial descents, in the time for which she was contracted, and these difficulties were compounded when in May 1903 Doubleday asked her to undertake additional editorial work. 'I must', she told him, 'look to you to furnish me with the result of these special searches. If I have to make them myself it will postpone indefinitely the completion of the editorial work you have suggested' (VCH A7: Constance M. Toulmin to Doubleday, 5 May 1903).

Doubleday was not impressed. 'We must', he told her, 'push forward with the topography of Hampshire as fast as possible we are so behind with it and we fear the rate of progress as sketched by you would not be so rapid as we could wish'. He did not accept her proposal of employing other researchers for 'special searches', because the only person who could work through the PRO material 'economically' was 'someone who has the threads of the descents in his or her

head' (VCH A7: Doubleday to Miss Toulmin, 25 May 1903).

Miss Toulmin thought the matter over and decided she could not continue on these terms. She sent him all the work she had done on Crondal Hundred, including 'a list of points to be decided by local enquiry for which I think you have already made arrangement'. Miss Toulmin felt undervalued and underpaid. She had agreed to work for two years at £50 per annum with an extra £25 for assistance and correspondence, to be paid in March 1903. Hardy had paid her for the first year (£50) but she had received only '£2 on account of the £25' and as a result was out of pocket for 'assistance in sorting etc ... and I hope you will send me this balance', together with the sums she was owed for her work since March 1903 (VCH Archive A7: Toulmin to Doubleday, 12 June 1903). Doubleday paid off her balance of £23 in May, and subsequently added a further £10 for her work March-May 1903 on topography for the third Hampshire VCH volume (VCH Archive A28: fols. 917, 1002) Crondall Hundred was subsequently published in volume IV under the name of Annie McKilliam. Meantime Miss Toulmin had walked out, and Henniker-Gotley had been thrown out. It was not a good start.

The problems in Hampshire led to a rethinking of how the VCH should undertake topographical studies, and in the course of 1902 Hardy's record agency partner William Page joined Doubleday in a dual general editorship. Page brought a new perspective to the VCH, pushing through to publication a guide to writing for the VCH, but just as importantly recognising the need to rethink the whole way of proceeding if the planned topography was ever to be completed. A hint as to his role can be found in the editorial note to volume II: 'It was found necessary to revise very largely the system of dealing with original research for the Victoria History Series as a whole. Experience proved that many classes of records would have to be exhausted for all the counties in order to obtain the information needed for the compilation of the articles contained herein.' (VCHH 1903, xiii)

What this actually meant was that topograph-

ical writing had to be temporarily abandoned, while the PRO and the British Museum reading room were blitzed for records relating to all counties. Then and only then could the writing of manorial descents resume. Hardy and Page were to use their record agency experience to recruit research workers to trawl the indexes and catalogues. The material would be sorted on a Hundred and parish basis, and then used by a local editor to compile manorial descents or, as was to be the case in Hampshire in the wake of the Henniker-Gotley affair, by 'a staff of post-graduate women students who had specialised in history and had some acquaintance with records' (VCH Archive: Doubleday memorandum 7 May 1938).

Page reorganised the VCH Central Office in London, and in 1904 Constable & Co. moved from Whitehall Gardens to more spacious premises in Orange Street. Next Page recruited a group of researchers, mostly but not exclusively women. Through 1904 anything up to fifteen or so young ladies spent day after day in the PRO searching whole classes of record for references to individual places across the country. In the late afternoon they returned to the VCH Central Office for 'sortation', the process of separating out their notes into counties, hundreds and parishes. Huge swathes of records and indexes were searched, and when this process was completed the ladies, or at least some of them, were trained by Page in using the material to write manorial descents.

In turn, these manorial descents were checked by 'topographical supervisors', among them Lillian Redstone, who wrote the entry for Havant Parish and Liberty, and part of the entry for Portsdown, for the third VCH Hampshire volume (VCHH 1908). From the topographical supervisors the entries went forward to Page for final editing (Thirsk and Imray 1958, 9–10). All this meant a delay in the publication of topography, but the results are clear from the third and fourth Hampshire VCH volumes, published respectively in 1908 and 1911, and written almost entirely by women, several of whom had passed through the Oxford Honours School of Modern History, or held London degrees (Table 1).

Altogether some 21 women were named as contributors to the VCH Hampshire, mainly writing topographical entries. These women were among the earliest to enjoy higher education, although at Oxford (until 1920) and Cambridge (until 1948) they could not take their degrees. By offering them work on the VCH, Page provided employment opportunities which they might otherwise have struggled to find, since even with an education a middle class woman at the time had usually to choose between teaching and marriage (VCH Archive A6: Doubleday to W.P.W. Phillimore, 31 March 1903; Doubleday memorandum 7 May 1938; Robinson 2009).

Several of them researched and wrote on other counties and in other branches of history. Olive Moger wrote topographical entries for Bedfordshire, Hertfordshire, Rutland, Sussex, Warwickshire and Worcestershire in addition to her Hampshire work. Marjory Hollings wrote also on Berkshire, Huntingdonshire, Rutland and Worcestershire. Both she and Miss Moger became distinguished local historians in their own right, and Miss Moger was Honorary Archivist to Exeter Cathedral Chapter. Audrey Amy Locke was a local girl, a pupil at St Swithun's School in Winchester, before she went to Somerville in 1900 and graduated, like Hollings, through the Oxford Honours School of Modern History. She also wrote on Nottinghamshire, Worcestershire and Devon, although the latter was never published, and was a noted water colourist.

Not all of the women employed on the VCH seem to have been willing volunteers. In October 1908 Miss Ada Hendy, who was at Somerville 1893–5, heard that work might be available but she was not exactly enthusiastic: 'Miss [Cicely] Wilmot tells me that you are prepared to offer me work on Hampshire. I should be willing to accept it on the understanding that I can at once give it up if I hear of something better.' (VCH Archive A7: Miss A.M. Hendy to Page, 7 Oct 1908) Page was unfazed. He agreed to meet with her, and they came to an arrangement whereby she was to write various topographical entries for different Hundreds. Whether reluctant or not she took

Table 1 VCH Hampshire Women Contributors

Brodie, E.G.
Brough, Frances, MA London
Curtis, Myra
Garbett, Henrietta Lucy Elizabeth
Grundy, A.R.
Hartland, E.M.
Hendy, Ada Matilda, Oxford Honours School of Modern History (d. 1938)
Hewitt, Ethel M
Hollings, Marjory, Oxford Honours School of Modern History (Hollings 1928; 1934-50; 1948)
Kennedy, Frances
Laughton, G.A.
Light, Hilda M.
Locke, A. Audrey, Oxford Honours School of Modern History (d. 1916) (Locke 1911; 1913; 1916)
McKilliam, Annie M., MA St Andrews
Moger, Olive Mary (Moger 1954; Webb 2008, vii-xiv)
Perry, Margaret, M.A. (R.U.L.)
Powell, Hilda Margaret
Redstone, Lillian J. (Redstone 1944; 1946; 1947; 1948)
Shillington, Violet M., Hist. Tripos, D.Sc (Econ) (Shillington 1906; 1907)
Toulmin, Constance [not an author]
Upcott, Katharine M.
Wilmot, Cicely, Oxford Honours School of Modern History

on the work and, evidently, did not manage to find a better job since she wrote Fareham, Titchfield, and co-authored Bermondspit for volume III, and the whole of the New Forest Hundred for volume IV.

Towards the end of 1908 the VCH ran into financial difficulties. Work stopped, and the young women employed in the VCH Central Office were dismissed. Funding was not found to continue the work until 1910, which explains the publication gap between volumes III and IV. When work resumed, it did so in only ten counties, one of which was Hampshire. It was clearly in the interests of the VCH to continue with the county given that it was the nearest to completion of a set, as Page fully understood, but for those counties that continued some funding had to be raised locally hence, presumably, the cryptic comment in the preface to the Hampshire bibliography in 1914, where it was noted that 'the publication of the volumes which form the History of Hampshire and the Isle of Wight is due to the financial support afforded

by the Rt Hon the Viscount Hambleden, the Rt Hon the Viscount Alverstone, the Rt Hon the Lord Ashcombe, Mr O.E. D'Avigdor Goldsmid, Mr Somerset A Beaumont, and the late Mr Frank McClean, of whose public spirit and generosity it is here desired to make special recognition'. None of the other volumes mention any form of financial contribution.

Volume V was published in 1912, and included the Isle of Wight topography. For this work, Page relied on Percy Stone (1859–1934). Stone, born in London, was a Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries and of the Institute of British Architects, and was on the national VCH Architecture Committee set up by Doubleday. He joined the Isle of Wight section of the Hampshire committee in 1899, and was among those thanked in the editorial note to volume I. Doubleday saw Stone as playing the role of local editor for the Isle of Wight, probably in the same manner as the ill-fated experiment with Henniker-Gotley, because of his interest in the archaeological and architectural antiq-

uities of the island. As early as December 1899 he was hoping to supply Stone with sample entries to give him an idea of what was needed for the topographical entries (VCH Archive A7: Doubleday to Stone, 22 April, 5 Dec 1899).

With the many subsequent delays to the series, including the financial difficulties of 1908, it was several years before Stone was pressed for his entries. He seems to have completed East Medine Hundred, for which he wrote the general descriptions and manorial descents, but to have run out of time when working on West Medine Hundred. Page wrote to him on 7 October 1908 to say that 'I have been looking into the question of time and I feel rather doubtful from what you tell me whether really you will be able to complete the West Medine parishes by the time which we want – working as you are now. I am sorry to have to hurry the work forward but it is a matter of very peculiar importance that the complete set of volumes for Hampshire should be finished off as soon as possible.' In a response the following day, Stone agreed that he simply did not have the time to complete the work, and he accepted a suggestion from Page that Miss Katharine Upcott, 'who has had some experience now on the sources of Hampshire topography', should be engaged 'to compile the manorial descents from our material'. Page described Miss Upcott 'as a pleasant lady to work with; who has lately come from Somerville College, Oxford, where she took History.' He proposed that she draft the entries and that 'when she has done this as far as she can perhaps you would run through the result amplifying with your notes.' Stone admitted he would 'be very grateful for Miss Upcott's assistance'. She subsequently left the VCH to study at the London School of Economics, and when volume V appeared in 1912 the descriptions and manorial descents for West Medine were attributed to Stone assisted not only by Miss Upcott, but also by Margery Hollings, Hilda Light and Olive Moger (VCH Archive A7: Page to Stone, 7 Oct 1908; Stone to Page, 8 Oct 1908; VCHH 1912, x).

If Stone thought he was off the hook for volume V, it was not to be, since in January 1909 Page approached him

to undertake the whole of the architecture and local descriptions for all the parishes, allowing on an average 1500 words – to include architecture and descriptions for each parish. We are doing the manorial descents here and if we may we will send them on to you to run through for additions and corrections. I should like you also to do the whole of Carisbrooke and Newport including local descriptions, architecture, descents, history, advowsons etc. for each of which we will allow 6000 words. Have you the charities for West Medine?

Page offered Stone the standard VCH rate (for women as well as men) of a guinea per 1000 written words and a guinea per ten printed pages for looking over the manorial descents. His help was clearly invaluable since in the editorial note to volume V Page included 'a special word of thanks to Mr Percy G. Stone', for his contributions to the volume, and for always being ready with advice and assistance 'in all matters connected with the history of the Isle of Wight, a subject he has made so particularly his own' (VCH Archive A7: Page to Stone, 15 Jan 1909; VCHH 1912, xix).

Page also ran into some difficulties with the Earl of Malmesbury in relation to Christchurch Hundred, for which the general descriptions and manorial descents were written by John Harley and Audrey Locke. Malmesbury wrote to Page from Scarborough in August 1911 to say that he had read the proofs of Christchurch Hundred 'and I think I ought to be able to help you with some of the details', gaps he recognised because Page and his researchers had not consulted the documents in his muniment room. He also offered to look through the scheduled list of deeds kept locked in the vaults of his London strong room (VCH Archive A7: Earl of Malmesbury to Page, 20 Aug 1911).

Page was grateful for the offer, but concerned that Malmesbury's vacation in Scarborough might last too long for him to be of use since he needed the Christchurch proofs to be returned to the printers during the first week in September. He told Malmesbury on 21 August: 'As you will notice what I mainly want is the completion of the manorial descents during the last two hundred years. To obtain the information for this I think the easiest plan (if you

would allow me) would be to call upon your lordship's London solicitors who are pretty sure to have abstracts of title to your estates.' (VCH Archive A7: Page to Malmesbury, 21 Aug 1911) Malmesbury was having none of this. On 22 August he responded imperiously to Page:

I believe I was put on the Advisory Committee for my own County and have been waiting all these months, in fact years, to hear further. I was one of the first to interest myself in the Hampshire vols as I am much interested in this sort of work. I cannot therefore quite understand why I especially should have been left out when the moment arrived. No good could possibly be gained by your consulting my solicitors (this from experience). I would suggest you waited until you saw me if you want the information to be accurate. I will read through the proofs again. (VCH Archive A7: Malmesbury to Page, 22 Aug 1911)

Page took refuge behind the publishers:

I am sorry if I should have seemed over urgent in the matter of the proofs of Christchurch Hundred, but the Directors of the Victoria County History Syndicate are extremely anxious to get the last volume of Hampshire published. I particularly wish, however, that the work may be complete and accurate as possible and will, therefore, keep back the proofs of Christchurch Hundred till the middle of September that I may have the additional information which you kindly offer. (VCH Archive A7: Page to Malmesbury, 23 Aug 1911)

Malmesbury was duly given pride of place in the acknowledgements: Page declared himself 'particularly indebted' to him for his contribution and for supplying some of the illustrations. Even so, Malmesbury's cool relations with Page are hard to explain given his enthusiasm for the VCH in the early days, when he enjoyed a warm relationship with Doubleday. Malmesbury had agreed to be Secretary of the Hampshire committee, and had also published an article in the first edition of *The Ancestor*, a Constable & Co. periodical masterminded by Doubleday. It was launched in January 1902, and Malmesbury contributed the first article (Malmesbury 1902; CUL Add 9507: Malmesbury to Doubleday, 4, 11, 25 Feb 1902).

Volume V also included general essays on political, social and economic history, agriculture and sport. The essay on economic history was written by Violet Shillington, described as History Tripos, D.Sc (Econ). Miss Shillington was only too grateful for the work. She approached Page in November 1911:

If you found it satisfactory I should be very glad to write another similar article should you be able to proceed with the other counties later on. I gather that for the ten counties you are now proceeding with the 'social and economic' articles are all written. If you think that I could do any of the remaining topography I should be pleased if you would let me know, as I am only partly occupied just at present, and could devote time to record work if you have any spare now.

Page told her there was no further work available, and she was not employed again, although she did go on to write economic history books (VCH Archive A7: Miss Violet Shillington to Page, 9 Nov 1912, Page to Miss Shillington, 11 Nov 1912. The reference to the ten counties is to the decision taken after the 1909–10 financial crisis only to proceed with ten counties for the foreseeable future). VCH Hampshire was completed with the publication of volume V, mainly relating to the Isle of Wight, in 1912, and an index to the whole set in 1914. Since the researchers operated from London mistakes were perhaps inevitable, with Benstead St Clair being placed near Alton rather than Droxford. Local historians who might have helped to avoid such errors were not invited to become involved, a result perhaps of the Henniker-Gotley fiasco, although several of the young women had family connections in the county (Hicks 1994, 173).

At the time this seemed to be all that was needed. In Hampshire, the VCH appeared to have filled the void left by the failure of earlier county history projects in the county, and it had covered the county. The essays written for the general volumes were relatively straightforward, and their continuing value should not be discounted. Professor Mike Fulford of Reading University, who is Director of the Silchester Field School, retains 'huge respect

for the achievements of Joyce and the Society of Antiquaries at Silchester and their work certainly endures ... the account in VCH is a very important synthesis of the work accomplished up to 1899' (Personal Communication from Professor M. Fulford, 22 April 2010; *Oxford DNB* article 33762: Francis John Haverfield [1860–1919]) Francis Haverfield's numerous entries on Romano-British archaeology for different VCH county sets, helped him to become Camden professor of Ancient History at Oxford in 1907 (Craster 1920, 63–70; Freeman, 2008. Unfortunately, Freeman seems not to have been aware of the Haverfield correspondence in the VCH Archives). Other sections have been outdated by more recent work including the treatment of Domesday Book which has been superseded several times (e.g. Williams and Erskine 1989). The manorial descents and advowsons remain useful (Hicks 1994, 173. The ongoing value of the manorial descents for Hampshire can be seen, for example, in Gallon 2006).

Not surprisingly there have been calls for the VCH Hampshire set to be revised if not to be rewritten. F. Warren, J.P., one of the three honorary secretaries of the Hampshire Field Club and Archaeological Society, wrote to the VCH in May 1950 asking if 'any active steps are being taken to collect corrigenda, with a view to publishing a supplementary volume of corrections embodying later research. Our correspondent rightly points out that in pre-history, and in the sections on agriculture, economic histories, and maritime development, there are now very obvious defects.' Ralph Pugh, the general editor, to whom such letters were regularly addressed, commented rather wearily that 'I am afraid that there are so many counties, the history of which has not been completed in this series, that it is unlikely that my committee would sanction the publication of a volume of corrigenda for Hampshire', but he would be happy to receive information on errors.' Later that same year Pugh was approached by the Rt Hon Harold Baker, President of the Hampshire Archaeological Society, about revising the Hampshire VCH. The Society, he told Pugh, had estab-

lished a small sub-committee to report on the VCH Hampshire. Pugh offered the same 'rather discouraging' reply, while not quite closing the door (VCH Archive Q40: R.B. Pugh to Harold Baker, 1 Dec 1950; Baker to Pugh, 7 Dec 1950; F. Warren to Pugh, 15 May 1950; Pugh to Warren 24 May 1950). Perhaps as a result, Miss Loie Hacking of Christchurch asked the same question in 1968, and Pugh was still stonewalling: 'we shall not revise our Hampshire volumes because there is so much ground still to be covered in other counties, and to prepare first and second editions of the *History* concurrently would be administratively impracticable.' (VCH Archive R63: Miss L. Hacking to Pugh, 2 July 1968; Pugh to Miss Hacking, 5 July 1968)

VCH Hampshire might have been the VCH guinea pig, but at least it was completed in a reasonable length of time. It was the individual parish studies which were labour intensive because of the demand that they be written from the sources, and the London office found itself forced into adapting to new methods in order to keep the project going. The major innovation was to move away from the original hybrid expectation of parish histories being compiled and written by a combination of London-based record agents and local clergymen under the direction of a county editor. This failed in Hampshire when Doubleday and Henniker-Gotley crossed swords, and when Miss Toulmin accurately predicted that the method of working was impractical. Doubleday may not have accepted her views, but the reorganisation of the VCH office in 1904 was more or less along the lines she was proposing.

The deployment of young women who otherwise faced uncertain working lives beyond their time at university showed that they, rather than recalcitrant clergy, could play a key role in researching and writing parish entries, and the VCH was willing to acknowledge their contribution by name. Hampshire also showed that many of the other assumptions as to how the project would work also needed revising, notably in relation to the positioning of the topographical entries. And, because funding

was found, Hampshire survived the financial crisis which temporarily halted work on the VCH in 1908–9.

Despite their age the volumes are still consulted – the digital editions of volumes II to V are available online, and between 2006 and 2009 they had 355,000 page views. The Hampshire VCH may need revising, and it may be rather less of a statement for all time than was thought to be likely to be the case back in 1899, but it can no longer be said that the county had received less attention from local historians than any other county in England.

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