

In Autumn 2019, in the South West we currently have three book conservation projects:-

1. The Arts Society Falmouth volunteer at the National Maritime Museum Falmouth. This is a long term project started 20 years ago that has seen the group follow the Bartlett library from fairly uncomfortable surroundings into the National Maritime Museum where they now work. There are over 20,000 volumes in the library and it is one of the finest collections of maritime books and periodicals in the country. One of their volunteers received the Marsh Award two year ago in recognition of his contribution to the conservation of the volumes in the Bartlett Library.
2. The Arts Society Truro project in the Royal Cornwall Museum Library, is one of our longest running projects, it started in 1993. There are 14 volunteers involved with this project at the museum's Courtney Library. In 2013 the senior staff at the museum gave a reception to all the volunteers working on this project in recognition of their 20 years of work in the Royal Cornwall Museum.
3. The Arts Society West Cornwall project at the Morab Library in Penzance is a more recent project that was started 4 years ago. It involves conserving and cataloguing manuscripts about the life and social history of West Cornwall which are held in the libraries collection.

Each of these library projects has a story to tell.

Recently completed projects include The Exotic Plant Research project by The Arts Society Falmouth which recorded the importation and distribution of exotic plants that came through the ports of Falmouth and Penryn 1750 to 1900. The printed results of this research based project have been placed in the libraries of Royal Cornwall Museum, Cornwall Record Office, The Cornwall Garden Trust, Morab Library and the Royal Botanical Gardens library at Kew. This is an important and unique project. There is a link to the results on The Arts Society Falmouth website under Volunteers.

The Arts Society Liskeard recently completed a project cataloguing and digitizing the archives of the St German family at Port Elliot Cornwall. Over 2000 19th and 20th century photographs were digitized, many were previously unknown and are of national interest. These were copied at the request of the St German family and passed on to the relevant museums and also other interested organisations. The results are being placed on a website currently being constructed in the USA. Recognition of the work by The Arts Society volunteers is being acknowledged on the website. Additionally the St German family asked that the Liskeard Heritage Volunteer Representative should visit the History Societies in Cornwall to give a talk on this project.

The Arts Society Taunton have now completed their project transcribing and digitizing the 18th / 19th century Edwardian archives of the Hestercombe Garden Trust along with additional documents relating to the decline between 1804 -1822 of the Hestercombe estate. The formal garden design at Hestercombe is the work of Sir Edwin Lutyens and Gertrude Jeckyll. The Arts Society Sidmouth completed a project in the Library at Sidford Manor, home of the Cave family who regularly open their library to the public, this project lasted 5 years. In the South West there are 7 archive projects - 4 societies (Sidmouth / Exeter / Honiton / Tiverton) are working on projects at the Devon Records Office in Exeter. Additionally 3 societies are involved in projects at the Somerset Heritage Centre in Taunton. The first project here was started in 1993, as each project is completed the volunteers establish a new one.