



28 November 2016

Dear Member of The Friends of Devon's Archives

First, I hope this message doesn't wind up in your spam folder. Frequently the first email you receive from an organisation does meet with this fate – and this is the first time you have received a message from this address. So, if a fellow member of FoDA tells you they haven't received this message, tell them to check that it is has not automatically been consigned to the dustbin of suspicious and nefarious communications.

Those who were not at the last AGM in Plymouth in October will be interested to learn that that meeting included an extended and in-depth discussion about what we do as an organisation, our role in the wider world, and how we can improve what we do and, at the same time, save money. To summarise our conclusions,

- The Friends of Devon's Archives is hugely valued as a 'voice' for archives in Devon – an important role that is not paralleled by any other Devon historical organisation.
- FoDA is valued for our help acquiring and arranging the deposit of archives, for our publishing role and our website, and for role as a critical friend to the archive managers.
- Our conferences do overlap with those of other organisations and perhaps could be replaced from time to time with other events, including visits to historic houses with archives and specific talks, and liaison with other heritage organisations.
- Our communication with members could be improved by direct emails to and from the chairman. This might include news items relating to Devon's archives and also emails from other organisations (e.g. The National Archives) aimed at our members.
- The time required to assemble the newsletter twice a year, have it laid out, printed, collected and distributed is considerable. The printing and postage also add a financial cost of almost £500 per year. These need to be minimised - although it is noted that not everyone is on email.

As a result of these conclusions, the committee had a meeting earlier this month and we decided on the following changes:

- That we should do what we do best, in being a voice for archives, publishing and maintaining our website and being a 'critical friend' to repository managers.
- We will try to arrange events in conjunction with other organisations – both to avoid clashes and to maximise the advantages of pooling our resources.
- That we will cease to publish and post the newsletter in a printed copy. Instead we will produce an on-line A4 leaflet in pdf format, which will be available on our website (as past newsletters have been). This will save in the region of £450 each year – money which can be better spent on the archives. Further to this:

- Those who ARE on our email list will be sent the newsletter by email, which they can print out if they so desire.
- Those who are NOT on our email address list will receive a print-out by post from the website of the next newsletter in Spring 2017. This will alert them to the new policy and the improved channel of communication. If they do not register an email with the membership secretary, Peter Towey, then they will continue to receive a printout of the newsletter by post every six months (but not other electronic communications).
- We will reschedule our Spring conference (previously set for 25 March) and instead have a FREE afternoon of events for members on the afternoon of **Monday 3 April 2017** at the Devon Heritage Centre. Details about this will follow in a separate email shortly.
- We will endeavour to keep members up to date with relevant news directly by email.
- We will encourage direct communication between members of FoDA and the committee.

With respect to that last item, if you want to place anything on the committee agenda, or to draw to our attention the impending sale of an archive or important document of interest to Devon historians, or to draw the committee's attention to an aspect of archival service at one of the publicly funded repositories, or draw anything else to our attention, please do email the chairman at

**chairman@foda.org.uk**

I cannot emphasise strongly enough how important it is that our members get involved and contribute to our purposes. You are the ears and eyes of the organisation as much as the committee, and working together could tremendously benefit us as users, future users and the archives themselves. Also, if you know of anyone who might join the Friends, or who is already a member of FoDA and has yet to send us his or her email address, please do direct them to our website – [www.foda.org.uk](http://www.foda.org.uk) – either to fill out the form there or to report an email address to our Membership Secretary, Mr Peter Towey.

These changes will, I am sure, make for a better organisation in a fit state to help archivists look after records and papers in the county, and to draw attention to funding bodies the importance of looking after our archives. After all, our written heritage is not only of importance to those who regularly go into the Devon Heritage Centre and the Plymouth and West Devon Record Office: it is valuable to everyone.

Yours faithfully

Dr Ian Mortimer,

Chairman of FoDA.