

UNIVERSITY OF PLYMOUTH AND DEVON AND CORNWALL POLICE HERITAGE AND LEARNING RESOURCE PARTNERSHIP

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As a result of an initial contact made by Law and Criminology PhD student Robert Love (while researching the history of the police in the south west), with the Devon and Cornwall Police Learning and Heritage Collections Officer, Angela Sutton-Vane, an academic and research enterprise collaboration developed in 2009 between the Devon and Cornwall Police Heritage and Learning Resource ('the archive') and the University of Plymouth, based in the School of Law. Kim Stevenson, Dan Gilling and Zoe James from Criminology have been working with Angela to develop the partnership which has made considerable progress since it was established in March 2009. The collaboration offers significant opportunities for the University in terms of developing and generating research projects, teaching related activities and the potential to prepare and submit bids in relation to further cataloguing, digitalisation and public access to the archive.

Previously known as the Force Museum, Devon and Cornwall Constabulary's Heritage and Learning Resource is now based in Okehampton. Its primary role is to support the Constabulary's work within the community and to assist schools in delivering key areas of the National Curriculum such as Citizenship, Personal Health and Social Education) and history <http://www.policeheritagecentre.co.uk/>. One of the long-term aims of the Resource is to open as a Police Heritage Centre which will illustrate aspects of police history as well as contemporary policing and enable the archives to be open to the public. Key to such expansion is to extend the archive's current school learning activities to FE and HE level to promote greater public engagement and the prospect for students at both undergraduate and postgraduate level for dissertation work, postgraduate research and work based learning activities. Already two work based learning positions for final year BA Criminology students have been offered for 2009-2010 which will focus on the cataloguing of materials in the archive to start to integrate partnership experiences into the University curriculum. In July 2009 a Position Paper was commissioned from final year Criminology student, Fleur Jones, who had just graduated with a first class honours degree to investigate and prepare a report detailing what kind of textual information and documents are currently held in the archive, and which could provide further research sources for academic inquiry

The partnership has already opened up the potential for postgraduate research as access to the archive has exceptionally been permitted for University of Plymouth students and staff. At the moment the archive is only partly catalogued but there is a significant amount of primary source material dating from 1856 to the 1980s that has never been exploited from an academic perspective nor fully catalogued. As part of the University's Research Studentships Competition 2009 a successful bid was made for a full time student bursary to utilise previously unexploited material in the archive including police reports, letters, pocketbooks and visual propaganda, to investigate the creation, membership and activities of blackshirt fascists in the south west in the 1930s with a view to identifying parallels with contemporary extremist groups. History graduate Iain Channing was successful in securing the bursary and has started work on his thesis *From Blackshirts to Bombers: Social Fragmentation, Extremism and Public Responses. An examination of the legal mechanisms and official responses to the development of extremist groups in the south-west.*

It is anticipated that the partnership and wider research project will open up closer links for the University with not only Devon and Cornwall Police but the local archives and the City Museum whereby the University and its staff can act as a catalyst linking research and teaching opportunities. In addition it builds on the [SOLON](#) Interdisciplinary Studies in Crime and Bad Behaviour research collaboration and its link with the European History of Policing Unit at the Open University.