

THE PEOPLE OF DEVON 1918–1930

From War to Peace

David Parker

The signing of the Armistice in November 1918 brought conflicting emotions – relief the fighting was over, joy the nation was victorious, grief at the thousands killed, and hope that it had all been worthwhile. To many families living in Devon the 1920s did seem a better world – but it was also a fragile one fraught with uncertainty. Throughout this tense decade modernism battled die-hard tradition, and extremes of opinion swirled around every aspect of people's lives.

Life was undergoing massive changes. Seaside resorts prospered, but the mass market eroded any pre-war pretensions of gentility. Cars, char-a-bancs and motor cycles boosted the economy but the crowds and craze for speeding on Devon's roads brought new dangers. And, for better or worse, the age of the patrician owner of 'the big house' was fading away with many great landowners selling up and deserting the countryside. Civic life was changing, too, with its doors opening to women councillors and magistrates. Churches entered a decade of crisis as clergy, and their congregations, wrestled with religion's role in the recent war and its very unsettling aftermath. Fears of Germany were now replaced by fears of Bolshevism. Unrest, unemployment and poor housing remained deep-seated problems. Workhouses still existed – and not everyone in Devon avoided them.

Health care remained an uncomfortable mix of voluntary and state provision. Many hospitals only survived on community support, and many patients relied on charity. Great attention was paid to children's health, as worries abounded about the nation's fitness to defend the Empire and fight the next war. And schools still provided clear evidence of a class conscious nation. 'Door-opening' academic syllabuses dominated middle class schools, but those catering for working class children remained heavily biased towards the utilitarian skills thought appropriate for their future. The years covered in this remarkable book could be said to be when the modern world emerged – and even remote and rural Devon was not immune to its terrors, opportunities and excitements.

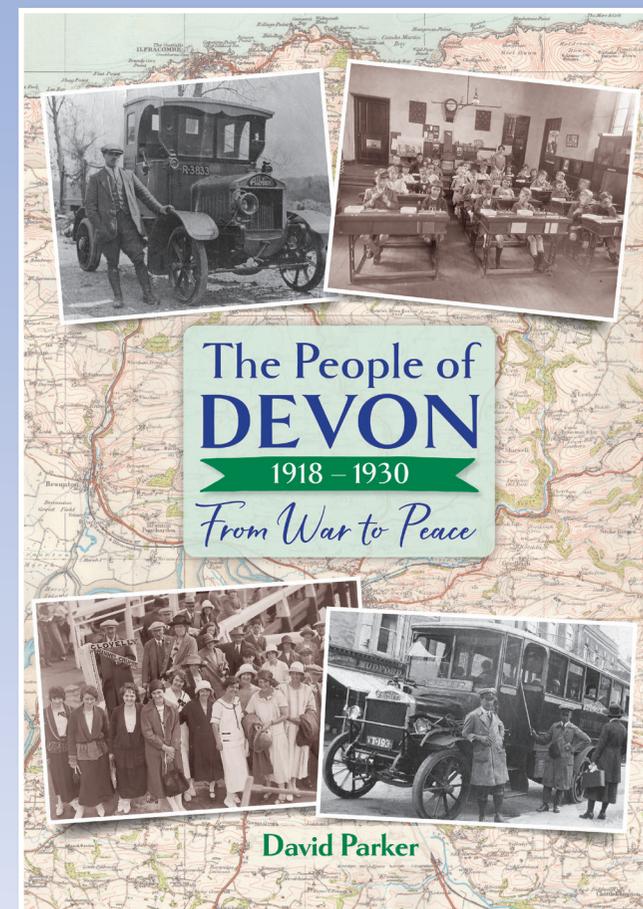
ABOUT THE AUTHOR

David Parker was a headteacher in Hertfordshire before becoming a History lecturer and then UK and European Masters Programme Director for the Faculty of Arts & Education in the University of Plymouth. He was a member of two three-year EU projects on educational leadership in the Czech Republic and Slovakia and a third on post-graduate action research. This is his tenth book on aspects of modern European and local history and he has written many articles for scholarly and popular journals. He has contributed to a dozen radio and TV programmes on his book *The People of Devon in the First World War*, and he has given many talks to local history societies. Dr Parker and his wife live in Exeter and have two grown up children.

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