

Museum's exceptional moor collection is thanks to one man's legacy

Richard Hansford Worth's decision to leave the bulk of his of images and documents to Torquay Museum following his death in 1950 helped the museum build an exceptional collection relating to Dartmoor.

Barry Chandler, of Torquay Museum, on how Torquay became home to an incredible collection of Dartmoor images and documents

This built on donations of geology and archaeology that were already in the museum.

Now work on digitising his image collection is finishing, making it available to the public online for the first time.

R.H. Worth was born in Plymouth on November 5, 1868. He was the son of Lydia Amelia Davies and the geologist, antiquarian and historian Richard Nicholls Worth.

He was educated at Plymouth High School for Boys, later called Plymouth College.

After leaving school he joined the engineering staff at Great Western Railway at Paddington.

He returned to Plymouth in 1890 and set up in private practise as a civil engineer.

In 1907, Worth married Miss Annie E. Kingwell of South Brent.

Worth had very wide interests and accomplishments but he is remembered best as an expert author and recorder of most aspects of Dartmoor, and as a highly respected civil engineer.

Resulting from his wide-ranging activities he was - among other things: a member of the Institute of Civil Engineers, a member of the Mineralogical Society, a member of The Marine Biological Association of the UK, a fellow of The Geological Society of London and he also became president of the Plymouth Institution in 1904 and president of the Devonshire Association in 1930.

Worth's best known book 'Worth's Dartmoor' was compiled after his death, created from many articles he wrote for the Devonshire Association on subjects as wide ranging as barrows and climate.

His geological collection consists of many specimens from the moors and from all over the local area as well as British and international samples.

The museum also holds his photographic archive and exposure records, this collection includes some of the first colour photographic slides taken of the

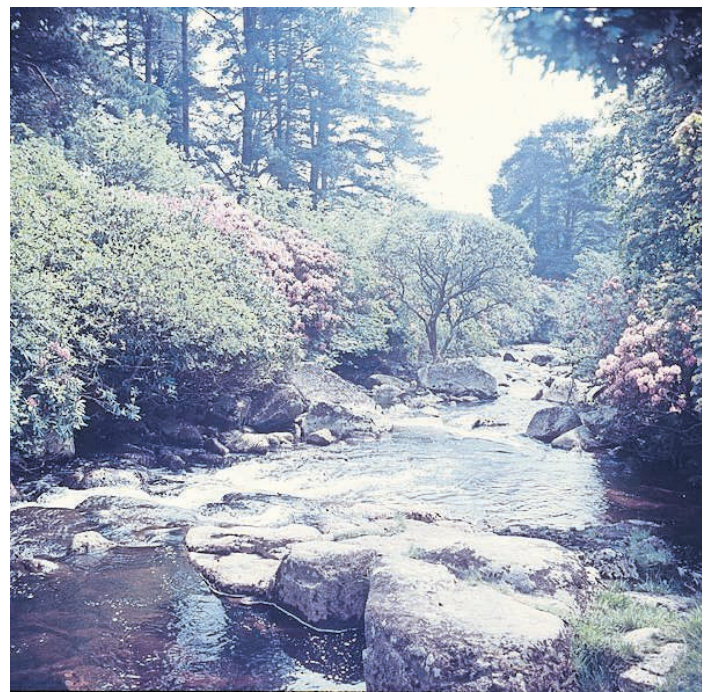
moor. Photography and painting were among the lesser known of Worth's accomplishments.

The museum has just completed the digitisation of around 800 lantern slides that were donated by Worth, many of which he would have used for illustrated talks given in Torquay and around Devon.

Many of these images have rarely been seen but they will now be available to view on the Dartmoor Archive website where the whole of the Worth Collection of more than 7,000 images taken between the 1880s and 1940s can now be found.

So why is all this material here in Torquay Museum and not in Plymouth, Worth's place of birth?

It appears that Worth had a disagreement with Plymouth City Museum and began donating items to Torquay Museum in the late 1930s, eventually bequeathing his archive, which came to the museum in 1951.



Above, River Avon, one of the first colour slides of the moor.

Left, One of the important images in the Worth Collection (PR37265)

Thanks go to The Dartmoor Trust and the National Lottery Heritage Fund who have financed

the digitisation of this important historic collection of photographs and slides.



Richard Hansford Worth, right, having a picnic with friends (PR31346)