



Devon Family History Society
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Devon Record Office



DEVON RECORD OFFICE

REGISTER OF PEDLARS CERTIFICATES OF THE CITY OF EXETER

1871-1874

DRO Reference - ECA

DFHS Book Reference - D001

A pedlar is a man or woman who travels and trades on foot, going from town to town or house to house selling goods or offering their skills in handicrafts and selling such things as household goods. A pedlar had no fixed spot, but had to keep on the move, which limited him or her to selling only those goods he or she could carry. Pedlars were therefore offering a rather different service from that offered by street traders. That was reflected in the "lighter touch" regulation that they enjoyed. Under the Pedlars Act of 1870, pedlars had to hold a certificate which was valid for one year and was also valid outside the city or town where they lived.

If a pedlar remained on one spot for any length of time, so effectively inviting customers to come to him or her, he or she would be street trading without the necessary authority. Such an action could lead to prosecution and confiscation of goods. There was no national legislation that covered the actual act of street trading, but local by-laws often prohibited this, or made it necessary to obtain a permit from the local authority before trading in the street. Street trading included selling newspapers, flowers and singing or performing for money

This Register of Pedlars' Certificates is part of the Exeter City Archives collection held at Devon Record Office. It records certificates issued annually to pedlars between January 1st 1871 and May 1874, by the Head Constable of the City of Exeter Police Force, under the Pedlars Act of 1870. The register lists the name and residential address of each pedlar and the date on which the certificate was granted and expired. Almost all of the pedlars listed were residents of the city of Exeter.

If a licence was lost, another could be granted. Pedlars could, however, be refused a licence if they had been previously convicted of a felony, and their licences could be confiscated for the same reason. The register records such cases.

The Exeter City Archives collection also contains two Registers of Pedlars' Indorsements, covering the dates 1871 to 1881. These record pedlars living outside Exeter, including those from other parts of England and Wales, who held certificates issued in other Police Districts which were indorsed by the Head Constable of Exeter City Police Force.