



Devon Family History Society
Joint Project Publication with
Devon Record Office



DEVON RECORD OFFICE

RETURN OF DEATHS – WESTERN DISTRICT, EXETER

1887-1889

DRO Reference – ECA

DFHS Book Reference - D072

One of the duties of the registrar for Exeter registration district was to make a list of all the deaths which had taken place in the city every week and submit it to the City Council. The registrar-general used the mortality figures to publish returns of deaths every quarter, which meant that it was possible to compare the death rate in Exeter with that of other towns and cities in the country. In 1872, for example, it was much higher in Exeter than in London and some of the other major cities. The fact that Exeter was shown to compare badly with the industrial cities, urged the Council to take action to improve the City's sanitation and water supply.

The registers were kept from 1870. At that time the city was divided into two parts, known as St Sidwell's and St David's Districts, but from 1879 onwards, these areas were known as the Eastern and Western Districts. The deaths were entered up weekly, in date order, one week to a page. This means that, as there was no index to the registers, a search for a specific death can take some time, even with information on the year date and quarter from the General Register Office indexes. This Devon Family History Society index should make searching the registers very much easier.

Nearly all the details found on a death certificate were entered into the registers. They record the name of the deceased, the date and place of death, whether the deceased was male or female, his or her rank or profession and the cause of death.