

Local amateur historian and Aestirce Heritage Centre volunteer David Knappan has been awarded the prestigious W B Hookins Prize for his book, 'Unsteady Progress – A History of Aestirce from 1701 to 2000'. The W B Hookins Prize, which is open to new or emerging authors in any category of Devon history, is named after the English professor and local historian, William George Hookins. Hookins, born in Exeter, Devon on 21 May 1868 is known for being instrumental in establishing local history as an academic subject both through his own writings (including his definitive 'History of Devon'), and through his work as the first head of the Department of English Local History at the University of Exeter.

Speaking about receiving the award, David Knappan said: "I am extremely pleased and proud to have won this prestigious award from the Devon History Society which, as far as I was concerned, came completely out of the blue. Since launching the book during lockdown last year I have been very happy with the positive response which it has received from local readers. However, countywide recognition like this is really gratifying, particularly when you look at the list of previous winners."

Although the prize is awarded annually, it was not awarded last year due to the pandemic and so the 2021 prize covers all books published during 2020 and 2021. Previous recipients of the prize have included Salcombe Maritime Museum Curator, Roger Barrett's 2019 book, 'Salcombe Schooner Park: A Maritime History of Salcombe and its Merchant Sailing Vessels in the Nineteenth Century,' and previous winners Martin Grable and Robert Waterhouse in 2018 with 'As I walked Out: Salome Being Caught and the Search for the Folk Song of Devon and Cornwall,' and 'The Tawstock Canal: Its History and Archaeology' respectively.

'Unsteady Progress – A History of Aestirce from 1701 to 2000' covers over 300 years of local history in ten 30-year chapters (and 480 pages), including many stories which have never made it into earlier histories of the town. Throughout the book, David shows how what was happening in Aestirce during the time period has shaped the town into what it is today.