



Moretonhampstead History Society

Newsletter

April 2008

March Meeting:

We held our March meeting in the Stable bar of the Union Inn. We anticipated that we would need more room, and we were right, it was packed. I counted 63, but there seemed to be even more than that.

Our local GP, Tim Dudgeon, gave us a most interesting account of the Hambleton family and the development of our wonderful local hospital here in Moreton. The Hambletons were responsible for many fine buildings in and around Moreton, not least of which was the hospital, which the 2nd Viscount had built in 1901. To help fund it, the Moreton Carnival was founded in the same year, and was from 1908, called the 'Hospital Carnival'. Dr Dudgeon had a number of copies of Carnival handbills from the early years which were quite fascinating. Each year the Hospital Board issued a report, which listed the staff, number of patients treated and length of stay. They also listed the donors and the amounts given, most of the local pubs featured, albeit some were more generous than others! Over the years, members of the Hambleton family have continued to be involved with the Hospital. In 1997 Lord Hambleton was the Patron of the Improvement Appeal that set out to raise £200,000. It says much about the spirit and generosity of the people of Moreton and the surrounding villages & hamlets that they raised £400,000 in just six months. The Hospital continues to thrive and is now deemed the most efficient one in Devon. The average length of stay is now only 8 days; in 1903, it was 28 days! The Hospital has continued to adapt to meet the needs of its patients and the ever changing edicts of politicians. The fact that it has survived so long, despite being the smallest 'Cottage Hospital' in the county, is in no small part due to Tim Dudgeon and the very dedicated team that work there.

April Meeting:

Our next meeting will be held on 16th April at 7.30pm in the Community Club. Our Speaker will be Mike Perriam, who many will remember from his previous visit to our Society last year when he spoke about Exeter's buildings. This time his talk is Entitled:

'From the Ice Age to the Romans on Dartmoor'

Non members of the Society are very welcome to join us for a donation of £2 payable at the door.

Last month's Excerpts from The Exeter Flying Post:

I have been informed by several members that the Smethurst Schoolroom is now the Parish Hall – thank you.

Gary Cox adds; The Smethurst Schoolroom was built in 1864, and later became known as The Smethurst Hall. The building was paid for by a former Unitarian Church Minister, Reverend John Smethurst. Since 1951 it has been known as the Parish Hall. Throughout her life my Grandmother always referred to it as The Smethurst Hall rather than the Parish Hall.

No response yet with regards the Cricket Tour of 1870?

More New members!

The History Society welcomes **Christine & Lionel Holmes**, from Exeter Road, who joined at our last meeting, well known to many in Moreton. We also welcome **Jenny Barbour** who joined at the same time, Jenny lives in Pound Street. We look forward to seeing you all at future meetings of the Society.

Picture Puzzle– Answer:

The answer to last month's picture puzzle is as follows. Firstly, the location, which many of you recognised. This building can be seen on the unclassified road from Cossick Cross that leads to the reservoirs at Hennock. It is located opposite a large white house now called Rose Cottage. No one, however, could say what it was specifically built for!

The building was constructed in the 19th Century, to house a steam traction engine, owned by the Pepperdon Estate. My information comes from two sources: Peter Wills, who is a member of the family that used to live at Pepperdon, and also from Clarrie Colwell, whose father worked on the Estate, and lived in 'Rose Cottage'.



Clarrie Colwell writes –

'The building opposite Rose Cottage (as it is now called). It was built to house the steam traction engine which was used on the Pepperdon Estate when it was farmed by the Wills family, Because of the high chimney on the steam engine the door at the front was arched and the first tie beam on the roof was raised about two feet above the other tie beams so that the engine could be taken in. There was an area at one side inside the doorway which was paved with bricks to make a dump for coal and on the opposite side of the doorway there was a large slate tank to catch the rainwater from the roof for use in the engine. A pipe was also run from the well which supplied water to the cottage to the tank to supplement the water at times when it was necessary to augment the rainwater (this was a bit futile). When we lived there, the well ran dry almost always during the summer and we had to fetch water from the pump by the cattle shed in the corner of the field facing the cottage, and if that wasn't possible we had to fetch water from the well by Lewdons Cottages (needless to say we didn't wash too often).'

Traction Engines were used for many functions around farms in the 19th Century, and well into the 20th Century, many were still in use after the Second World War. Tractors soon took over completely, and traction engines largely disappeared from the agricultural scene. In their hey day, these machines were a common sight and used for mainly ploughing and threshing corn. As with many large items of agricultural machinery today, they were not cheap, and smaller farms would not have their own, but would hire them from Contractors.

I have been told by another member that some 15 years ago, the building was in quite good order. It was said the owner wanted to convert it to a holiday cottage, but was apparently refused permission by DNPA planners on the grounds that they '*wanted agricultural buildings left intact to preserve their Integrity*'. However, as it seems the farmer had no further agricultural need for it, and the building has been left to its own devices. The roof has fallen in, and it is now just a ruin, albeit with its 'integrity' still intact! Such a pity that this unique building is being lost in this way to the ravages of time.

By the way, Rose Cottage used to be called Keepers

Cottage, and was actually two cottages, not one house as it is now.

Clarrie Colwell has lent me an old map of the Pepperdon Estate. All the fields on the estate are named. I see that on the map, by way of confirmation, the field in which the aforementioned building stands is called 'Engine House Field'.

Anyone can contribute; please send articles to: christopher.pilkington@tesco.net