



Moretonhampstead History Society

Newsletter

April 2010

April Meeting:

This meeting will be held on 21st April in the Community Club at 7.30pm.

George Eliot and History By Brian Spittles

Brian Spittles, formerly Head of Humanities at Ruskin College, Oxford and a resident of Moreton, will talk about 'George Eliot and History'. George Eliot is now best known for the adaptations of her novels for television and cinema. Both *Daniel Deronda* and *Middlemarch* have been serialised by the BBC in recent years; but there is more to Eliot's writing than costume drama. Her work encompasses social issues which generated fierce debate in mid-Victorian Britain: the rise of the Trade Union movement in industrial cities; railway expansion which enabled the working classes to become mobile; the position of women in society and the inadequacy of their education, and dissension from the established church to name but a few. Concepts of love and duty, social responsibility and the value of honest labour permeate her novels. Light refreshments will be available beforehand.

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

March Meeting:

In March a full room (65 in all) at The Union heard Mark Cottle talk about the construction of Exeter Cathedral during the medieval period, when most of the present building was completed. Work began on the Norman cathedral in 1133, and the two great square towers on either side of the nave are from this period. The rest of the present cathedral was started in 1270 and was essentially completed before the Black Death in 1348. The Fabric Roll gives a minute account of the materials used in the construction, and their costs, and is probably the most complete account of its kind still extant. Mark examined the detail and delicacy of the stone and wood carvings and reminded us that most of the fabric would have been brightly coloured in the Middle Ages. He also drew our attention to the Cathedral Library which houses many ancient volumes, in particular the 'Exeter Book', an extremely rare Saxon collection of poetry and riddles, probably given to the cathedral by Leofric who became Bishop in 1046. The Cathedral Library is due to close for removal and refurbishment in the autumn, so a visit before then would be worthwhile. This was a compelling talk accompanied by some excellent photography. **Wendy Coombes**

Picture Puzzle Answer:

Many of you correctly identified this as Hospit Cross, which can be seen at the crossroads on the Moreton to North Bovey road a mile outside the town close to the water treatment plant. The grid reference is 744847. This is believed to be an ancient waymarker for the route from North Bovey to Moreton. At a later date, perhaps in the early 19th Century, the letters 'O', 'M', 'N', and 'B' (respectively, for Oakhampton, Moreton, Newton Abbot, and North Bovey) have been carved onto it to indicate the relative directions of those locations. At a later date also, an Ordnance Survey bench mark has been added. The later wooden signpost, that can be seen in the background of the photograph, shows the location as



Hospit Cross, and one might therefore think of a Hospital connection. It is, however, thought to refer to the adjoining field known as Horsepit, or colloquially as 'Hospit' !

Dartmoor has well over 150 other similar crosses and waymarkers, and there may be more out there waiting to be rediscovered. If you are interested in seeing more of these crosses, then there is a very good website devoted to the subject. Then go to: www.dartmoor-crosses.org.uk.

New members:

We extend a warm welcome to **Richard Knights** and **Alan Murgatroyd**, both of whom joined at our last meeting in March. Richard lives in Docombe and Alan here in Moreton.

Garton & King/Garton&Jarvis/Issac Billet- information sought –can you help?:

This message and request for information comes from Richard Holliday, who is the son of the last Managing Director of this Exeter foundry.

'Please visit my website on the family business of Garton & King Ltd up to the closure of the foundry in Exeter in 1979 and the cessation of a family undertaking in 1990 when ownership passed to certain employees. The website is www.exeterfoundry.org.uk and the section particularly of interest to your Society is Chapter 5 "Greater Yet" Maybe some of your members may already know of this but in case they didn't could you "spread the word" .Garton & King's records show work having been undertaken in Moreton - work at the Church / heating / gates & railings - IF your society would like me to try and provide more info then, on request, I will. You will also find a liberal sprinkling of gullies, drains & manhole covers throughout the town - not something one normally examines -I being somewhat of an exception!

I should like to contact the owner of the property (ies) at which the Billett family lived -can you help in this regard please? I am NOT however holding my breath as to whether the stove still exists! but would like to hear from any of your members who have or know locally of any of G&K / G&J's products (excepting Gullies & Drains!) such as stoves, radiators, lamp standards, boilers, pumps, garden rollers etc.

I hope your members enjoy the website and take the time to read about G & K's nearly 350 year history'.

Richard Holladay

From Bill Hardiman-The Billetts (rope maker) are at a house called Battenbury (cannot find a house with that name to-day) on Court St. in 1841 & just at Court Street in 1851.

May Meeting:

This meeting will be held on **19th May in the Stable Bar of The Union Inn at 7.30pm.**

The Vikings In Devon By Derek Gore

Derek Gore is a teaching Fellow in the Archaeology Department of Exeter University, and has published works on the Romans and the Vikings in Devon.His talk last year on the Romans brought this period of history alive, and was extremely well received. We are pleased to welcome him back to tell us more about the Vikings