



# Moretonhampstead History Society

## Newsletter

April 2007

### Devon Family History Society:

On Saturday the 3rd of March, 14 people attended a one day course on Genealogy, hosted by members of the above named society. This included several members of our History Society. The course was held in the computer area of the Library.

It was a very interesting day, and we were shown how to investigate family history. Those of us who had not done any research into family history before found it particularly informative. The course was hailed as a great success, and it is likely that further courses will be held in the near future. In the meantime, if you are interested in joining the above society, contact the Exeter Group Representative Sheila Jewell on 01392 213144. Annual membership is £12.

You can also visit their website [www.devonfhs.org.uk](http://www.devonfhs.org.uk) : You do not have to be a member to visit this website and it gives you free access to many Devonwide records.

### April Meeting:

This will be held as usual in the Community Club on the 18th April, at 7.30 pm.

#### **The Story of the Hennock Reservoirs**

Dave Wills, a lifelong resident of this area, will talk about his family's mill, where the water treatment works at Trenchford Reservoir now stands. He will also talk about the construction of the Tottiford, Kennick and Trenchford Reservoirs. He has lots of old photos to show us, sounds like it will be a fascinating talk!

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

### Report on March Meeting:

On Wednesday 21st March, 32 members attended a talk given by Lieutenant Colonel (Retired) Tony Clarke OBE Commandant of the Dartmoor Training Area. The area used for training is about 20% of the total area of Dartmoor, some 33,000 acres. Dartmoor has been used by the Military since the early nineteenth century, then horses were ridden to Dartmoor from their bases, sometimes all the way from Aldershot! It became a regular training area in 1875, when the camp at Okehampton was established. Today it is mainly used for small arms training and although this involves some live firing exercises, I'm sure you will all be relieved to know that artillery is no longer deployed!

### March Picture Puzzle:

The mystery object is a Kistvaen (or Kist.) Kistvaens were created by people in the Bronze Age for burial. This particular example can be found close to the North Shore of the Fernworthy Reservoir. (map ref. 668844 ) They were usually built with the end stone slabs holding the side stones apart, and with another stone slab as a cover, but there are a great deal of variation in kistvaen construction so it is not possible to be precise. A mound of earth, or barrow, would have covered the kistvaen. These Kistvaens are believed to be some 4000 years old. It has been estimated that the population of Dartmoor in the Bronze Age was about eight to nine thousand people. Since the early historians began their work on the moor about 200 hundred burial tombs have been found. Many more may have been destroyed and, of course, it is still possible that there are others, yet to be discovered.

There were two main methods of interring the deceased, either the body was placed into the stone chamber in a crouched foetal position or the remains were cremated and the ashes placed in an urn and interred in the floor of the pit. Due to the acidity of the peaty soil many of the remains have been lost along with any perishable grave goods thus making it difficult to reach any firm conclusion as to the exact funerary rites. Kistvaens vary in size, but it is estimated than an average sized kistvaen would be about 1 - 1.5m long, 0.6m wide, and 0.6m deep.



### Visit to Tyntesfield - 30th May 2007:

There are still some places available on the coach for this trip. Please contact Wendy Coombes on 277580.

### Devon Rural Archive:

Several members of the Committee went to the Official Launch of the above Society. The event took place on Friday 16th March at the White Hart Assembly Rooms, Modbury; and was attended by some 200 people. Interested groups, including many History Societies like ours, came from all over the County and beyond. The aim of the group is to rediscover the remains of lost buildings and landscapes in Devon. To date they have visited and produced reports on over 50 properties and landscape sites in the County. There was an opening address by the DRA Patron, Lucinda Lambton, who spoke of the work done to date, including a discovery of an elaborate 18 century garden. Sebastian Fenwick also addressed the meeting; he is the founder of the Fenwick Charitable Trust that funds the DRA. His interest began 30 years ago when he bought an old cottage in Devon with a corrugated iron roof. When he removed this he found a complete thatched roof underneath!

**Of local interest;** Hayne Manor is on their list of properties to be researched, so I may be able report on this at a later date. If you are interested in joining the DRA they can be contacted on: 01548 830832 or on the internet at: [www.devonruralarchive.com](http://www.devonruralarchive.com)

### Abolition of Slavery:

We could be forgiven for assuming that a remote place such as Moreton at the end of the 18th Century would not have much involvement in the national issues of the day. We have just reached the Bicentenary of the Abolition of Slavery, and it is interesting to reflect that such major issues were being debated here, as this newspaper article from 22nd March 1792 shows:

*'On the 18th a respectable meeting in consequence of a public notice at the White Hart to consider the propriety of petitioning Parliament for the Abolition of the African Slave trade; where it was unanimously resolved, that petition then adopted, and signed by all the gentlemen present, should be left to receive the signatures of those gentlemen of the town and neighbourhood who could not be present at the meeting, and that before the middle of the week it should be transmitted by the chairman to one of the honourable members for the County to be presented to the House of Commons. It has already been signed by above hundred persons, who at the same time expressed their sanguine hope that this inhuman traffic shall not long remain a disgrace to Great Britain.'*

**Note:** Some **15 years** later! A Parliamentary Bill was passed on the 25th March 1807. The Act outlawed the Slave Trade throughout the British Empire, and also made it illegal for British ships to be involved in it.

### New Member:

We welcome John Farrand-Rogers, who came along to our March Meeting. John has very recently moved here from Exeter, and lives in Fore Street. We hope he will enjoy living in Moreton, and look forward to seeing him at future meetings.

### Memorials:

There are many memorials on Dartmoor, some are very ancient. The aforementioned Kists, could be regarded as memorials to people who died several thousand years ago. A more recent one, I came across a couple of years ago, whilst walking near the ruined Teignhead Farm, has the following simple Inscription:

**In memory of  
WO 1(RSM) S.L.PERRY RM  
12.11.49 –20.10.92**

The inscription is carved on a large piece of natural granite, and carved above it is the Crest or Badge of the Royal Marines.

I am grateful to the Information Centre at Postbridge for the following:

*'RSM Perry was the Regimental Sergeant Major of the Commando Training Centre at Lymptone. At the end of a Royal Marine's commando training, the marine, as part of his unit, has to march for 30 miles with full equipment and the full unit has to complete the march in a set time. RSM Perry was overseeing one of these exercises when he had a heart attack and died. He was a very fit man and his death was unexpected. His family and friends placed the stone as a memorial to him at the spot where he died. The stone was originally upright but is now on its back.'*

Anyone can contribute; please send articles to: [christopher.pilkington@tesco.net](mailto:christopher.pilkington@tesco.net)