



Moretonhampstead History Society

Newsletter

August 2008

July- Afternoon Site Visit:

On 2nd July, several members of the Society visited Tucker's Maltings in Newton Abbot. Tucker's is a traditional malt house, built in 1900, which still germinates barley for brewing in the way it has been done for centuries. The original equipment is used wherever possible, and this strong old building, with its warm and dark interior, wooden floors, stairs, hoists and chutes, gave us a good impression of rural industry at the end of the Victorian era. Thankfully, though, the rats have been exterminated! - Wendy Coombes

July Meeting:

You might recall that the scheduled meeting for July was cancelled. Into the breach stepped the bold Sir Michael Thomson, guardian of Castle Drogo. With great aplomb and the convenience of a chivalric slide projector, Michael showed us how military hardware was influenced by fashion from its origins in the tenth century through to its apogee in the sixteenth. From chain mail to plate armour, breastplates and backplates, great helms, bascinets, and even including steel skirts, we saw the whole array of body protection displayed and explained in relation to what people were wearing on a day-to-day basis. Folds in tunics were mimicked in steel backplates. Helmets were shaped to reflect the tips of hoods. Jousting armour was very much designed for display – different from armour designed for warfare – and so constituted a form of fashion all by itself. Best of all, Michael had brought along many pieces from his extensive collection of reproduction medieval armour, so the more gallant members of the audience were able to try on a hauberk or a pair of gauntlets. Fortunately no one was tempted to take up a sword and actually put the equipment to the test. (Chairman's note: I wonder if our insurance would cover members jousting?) -Ian Mortimer

September Meeting:

This meeting will take place in the Community club at 7.30 PM on 17th September. The subject will be:

'The East Dart'

By popular request, following his excellent talk on the West Dart, John Risdon returns to give a photographic presentation on the East Dart.

Dartmoor Magazine Article:

One of our History Society members, Leslie Miles has written an article which will appear in the **Dartmoor Magazine's** Autumn Issue. The piece is about the pioneering educational work done by his father-in-law, Cyril Hartley, in Dartmoor Prison. This was from the 1930's to the 1950's, at a time when the prison housed Category 'A' prisoners, among them many of the country's most notorious villains! Cyril Hartley was the French Teacher and, latterly, Assistant Head at Tavistock Grammar School. Members may want to look out for this article.

Newsletter and more now on Our Website!

Copies of the Newsletter, together with all previous editions, can now be found on our Website. Go to, www.moretonhampstead.org.uk. On the History Society Homepage click Historical Information. On the right hand side you will see a link marked 'Newsletters'. Click on that and you can select any previous Newsletter, by clicking on any of those listed.

In addition to all the newsletters since the start of 2007, you can now also find transcripts of the Chairman's Addresses at the AGM for the years, 2005, 2006 and 2007; the programme for the year, and, most importantly, a draft list of our archives. Most of this is available from the page about the society. Our thanks to Ian Mortimer for this work.

Picture Puzzle Answer:



The carved stones, as a number of you pointed out, can be found on Buckland Beacon above Buckland-in-the-Moor. The carving of the inscriptions was commissioned by William Whitley; the same man who had the clock dials inscribed with the words 'MY DEAR MOTHER' instead of numerals, at the church in Buckland. The inscriptions were, I understand, renovated in the 1990's; as you may imagine, they are in a very exposed place and therefore subject to much weathering.

Our President, Ian Mercer writes:

William Whitley of Buckland caused the Ten Commandments and a piece from Revelations to be carved on two slabs leaning against Buckland Beacon in 1928. He was celebrating the fact that the House of Commons had thrown out the revised Book of Common Prayer on the grounds that it 'returned our form of worship to Papalism'. The revision had taken 20 years to complete after a Royal Commission in 1907 said it ought to be revised. Whitley owned Buckland Common and thus the Beacon, and his estate stretched from the Dart below Buckland to Ilington.

Editors Note:

If you have not seen these stones and their inscriptions, they are worth a look. The best way to get to them is via Haytor. Head towards Widdecombe and take the next left turn after about half a mile pull in by a cattle grid. Cross the road and follow the level path for about half a mile and you will get to Buckland beacon

To all Clock Makers:

'Any persons willing to contract for erecting a new copper dial, with clock and chimes complete, for the Tower of the parish church of Moretonhampstead are requested to send in their estimates, including every additional expense for erecting etc. The chimes are to play every 1/4 hrs, the tune to be chosen by either the churchwardens or at their vestry. Each tender much(sic) specify separate and particular charges for an 8 day clock and 30 hr clock, with an opinion on each tender which of the two clocks is most suitable for the situation. The old dial, clock and chimes to be taken at valuation by the contractors and to be taken down and removed at their own expense. Sealed tenders to be sent, free of expense, directed to the Churchwardens, Moretonhampstead or before the 16th July '

From the Exeter Flying Post- 30th June 1814.

Was the tender for a new clock awarded at this time?

How old is the one we have now. Does it date back to the time of this tender?

Clearly the current dial is more recent, as it commemorates the Coronation of George VI in 1937, but what about the clock itself?