



## moretonhampstead history society

### A History of the Veterinary Service

At the November meeting one of our members & the town's former vet, Bob Pigott, gave an informative & entertaining illustrated talk entitled 'A History of the Veterinary Service'.

In the late 1700s, The Odiham Agricultural Society recognised the need for a better understanding of animal husbandry & disease. A Frenchman, Vial de St Bel, helped them refine the outline of plans for a veterinary school. The Veterinary College, London, was born in 1791, on the present-day site of the Royal Veterinary College's Camden Town Campus. The original building was a quadrangle in a neoclassical style, with a paddock on the opposite side of Royal College Street. The College acquired royal patronage from King George IV, & was granted a Charter of Incorporation in 1875. Various extensions were added over the years, until a new set of buildings were opened by George VI in November 1937. The site is hemmed in by other buildings & further expansion necessitated a second campus outside of London. The Hawkshead Campus in rural Hertfordshire was officially opened by Queen Elizabeth II in 1959. Other colleges were established in Dublin, Cambridge Edinburgh, & Liverpool.



*Moreton 'horse doctor' Saunders 1910*

## NEWSLETTER

DECEMBER 2011

Bob's talk was interlaced with several anecdotes from his own career. There were some very difficult times such as dealing with outbreaks of foot & mouth disease. But there were also some very amusing incidents, including ones related to him by, the Saunders, his predecessors, who had been the unqualified 'horse doctors' in Moreton related to him by, the Saunders, his predecessors, who had been the unqualified 'horse doctors' in Moreton from the 1880s to 1960. Once their horses refused to continue up the North Bovey Road & it turned out that it was because they could scent a drunken Russian & his bear asleep in a hedge on their way from Widecombe Fair!

P.S.

With the speaker's permission we will be keeping an audio digital record of our meetings. This will start a new section of the Society's archives - Bob's talk was the first entry.

### **NEXT MEETING**

**'Ice Age to Ice Cream. A light-hearted human history of Slapton Ley in south Devon'.**

On Wednesday 18<sup>th</sup> January our President, Professor Ian Mercer, will give a talk that promises to lighten up the mid-winter gloom. Our programme for this year will be available then; the annual subscription remains at £10 for individuals & £15 for joint membership. Non-members are most welcome: £2 on the door.

The Stables Bar at The Union Inn 7.30 p.m.

## Trip to cider barn at Farrants Farm, Dunsford November 19<sup>th</sup>

This trip threw us back centuries not just through seeing the 350 year old cider press in action but the amazing remaining building of the long house that houses the cider press & which dates back to Saxon times. The whole atmosphere was as if nothing had changed for centuries. The building looked a throw back in time with semi hidden scattered artefacts from various eras of farming,, the most modern being the gin traps.



Photo Richard Knights

### **Brian Spittles surveys the Hardy-esque scene of the cider**

The twin metal screws of the cider press were made by a local blacksmith but the press itself may have come from France giving the farm the original name of 'Farrance'. The apples from the local orchard were tipped down a shute to be milled & then hand shovelled on to layers of straw to make a 'mock'. The press is then wound down by hand to squeeze the juice out of the apples. The juice flowed in to a large barrel via a 'filter' that is actually an upturned plastic washing basket - the only concession to modern technology! It is then syphoned into oak casks to allow the natural yeasts to ferment the apple juice into cider over the next 6 months. The whole process was short & simple but very impressive. Who needs change?

### **Christmas Dinner at the White Horse**

This year's dinner was an enormous success. 44 members & guests enjoyed superb food prepared & served by Malene & Nigel & their staff in an efficient way while ensuring a very relaxed atmosphere. The 'historical' context was provided by the chairman's reading out of some recently discovered documents from the Gray family who ran the White Horse for over a hundred years. These included a 1930s bill for a week's stay at the White Horse that charged 3 shillings for '3 extra baths' - equivalent to £8.80p in 2011!

*Judy Hardiman*

## News from the archives

Many thanks to everyone who helped with the very successful opening of Green Hill. Our heritage displays received many appreciative comments. We would like to make the heritage displays & archives available on a regular basis. Please contact me if you would like to help in any way,

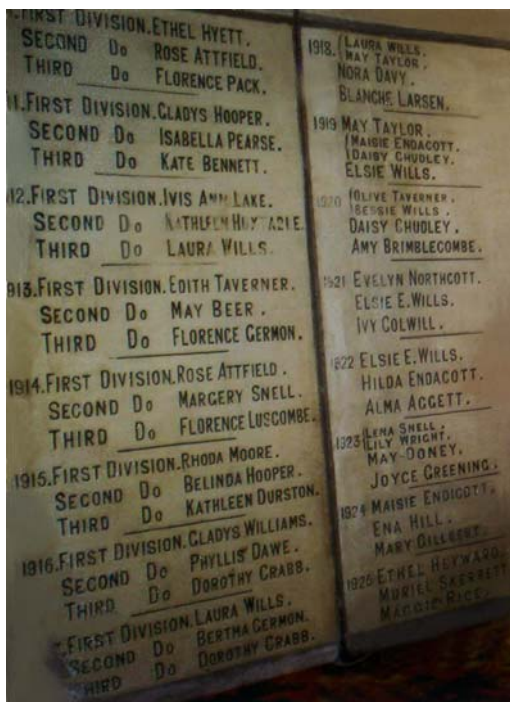
## American letter

One of the most fascinating items to come to light so far in the archives was in the Dramatic Society's wartime. Scrapbook. Among the programmes & playbills is a letter from a US army officer giving permission to put on a performance at the Smethurst (now Parish) Hall in February 1944. The details of his name, number, battalion etc have led to some more productive research after 6 months of deadlock on this fascinating & popular topic.....

## Bowring boards found!

Six months after my appeal in NIM, two of the missing boards listing the names of Bowring School prize winners 1910-1925 have been found - in the boiler room of the new school!. They are now back in the old school in our archive. By an amazing coincidence on the day that they were 'returned' Mike Jeffery told me that he had just paid out the last cheque to finally wind up the Bowring Prize Trust after about 110 years....

Bill Hardiman



Bowring boards

## Histor-Ian's corner

I'm going through the proofs of the next book (*The Time Traveller's Guide to Elizabethan England*) at the moment, charged by my publicist with pulling out a list of 'the most interesting bits'. This is much harder than she can possibly imagine - I've been surprised so many times in the course of writing it. I was amazed to read how the idea of a *British* empire dates back to Elizabeth's reign & particularly to Dr John Dee, the noted alchemist & astrologer, who told the queen that she should claim sovereignty of all the lands that her ancestors claimed (including America, courtesy of the mythical 12<sup>th</sup>-century Prince Madoc). I have been appalled by the extreme racism of the time & the harsh living conditions of the poor. I have been astonished by the scientific discoveries - Thomas Harriot beat Galileo to observing the moon through a telescope by several months, & William Gilbert experimented with unseen forces he called *electricitas*. But if asked to opt for one thing, I will go for the consequences of the Bible being translated into English. After the publication of the Great Bible in 1539, people read the word of God for themselves - & this did not just lead to Puritanism, Calvinism etc, it changed everything. Consider this: in 1500 less than 1% of women could read but by 1600, more than 10% could (& 25% of men). You had housewives' home manuals & cookery books being published at 4d a time. Literate women started to challenge men's authority over knowledge itself - & that's a fundamental shift in society, by anyone's reckoning.

Ian Mortimer

## Contributions welcome

We welcome contributions from members for the newsletter. Please e-mail them to me by the 10<sup>th</sup> of each month.

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