



Moretonhampstead History Society

Newsletter

January 2007

Happy New Year to all our readers!

History Society Annual Christmas Dinner

This took place on 13th December 2006 at the Union Inn, Moretonhampstead, where 39 members of the Society enjoyed a really excellent 4 course meal, including mulled wine. We were in the stable bar, which was beautifully set out and decorated. Even the most resolute of us, however, failed to manage the final cheese course on offer!!

Our host, Sian Coleridge, not content with providing such a good meal, gave an excellent talk on the history of the Union Inn. The building dates from 16th century, but she cannot be sure if it was an ale house at that time. There is some evidence of that it was one in the 17th Century, and the site included stables and a blacksmiths shop. Evidence of these were found when the rebuilding to create the present stables bar was undertaken. The Union Inn name first appears at the beginning of the 19th Century, before that it was 'The White Swan'. Sian has also found references to 'The Old Swan, she believes that name change may have been to commemorate the Act of Union of 1801. Many of the artefacts unearthed during the aforementioned rebuilding are now displayed along the corridor leading from the main bar to the stable bar. It is worth pausing in the corridor to look at them, next time you visit The Union Inn.

A big thank you to Wendy Coombes from us all, for organising the event so well.

Update on the Sparrowhawk Logo:

The sparrowhawk is the work of Eve Diamond-White. Peter Collier did do all the other drawings for the tea towel, but not the sparrowhawk. I am grateful to David Cannon for pointing out this error.

January Meeting:

Our next meeting will take place on Wednesday 17th January 2007 at 7.30 pm. in the Community Hall.

Presidential Address

The subject of the Address will be:

'The Anatomy of a Devon Lane'

presented by Ian Mercer

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

Visit to Tynesfield:

This is an advanced notice of a trip so that you can make an early entry in your new diary!

Tynesfield is an old manor house remodelled in 1864 in the high Victorian gothic style. It survives intact with an unrivalled collection of Victorian decorative arts, decorated private chapel and extensive servants quarters.

There are formal gardens, a walled kitchen garden with conservatories and an orangery

The visit will take place on Wednesday 30th May 2007, we will have a coach booked for the trip and will take a group of up to 50 people. The entrance fee for house, gardens and chapel is £9.90 for non National trust members, children £5. (plus the cost of the coach). Further details will be given later in this Newsletter –

This is a visit not to be missed!

email update:

I must apologise to those of you who do not have Broadband; I realised, all too late, after I had sent last months'

edition out, that the 'file' was rather large – over 4.5 megabytes! No problem to Broadband users, but those who do not have that luxury were faced with a download time of up to 30 minutes!! I will ensure that future editions are not so large, I have also found a means of compressing the pictures, this will help to keep the file size down, so that it can **always** be downloaded in a reasonably short time.

December's Picture Puzzle:

The granite shed in the woods. I had one or two responses, but no specific information. This building is in Wray woods, some 400 metres from the old haematite mine at Wray, and about the same distance from the old granite quarry, also in Wray Woods.

I think this building was used to store explosives either for use in the mine or in the quarry, probably built in the mid 19th Century. They would need a secure building for this, but for safety reasons, away from the whichever site it was used at. It is not easy to find, and anyone walking in Wray woods would have a hard job to locate it! I have not reproduced the picture, as I want to keep the size of the 'file' down, (see email update)

January's Picture puzzle:

This one is much easier than December's. I hope to get a bigger response this time.



The question is where can this stone be found, when was it erected, and what does the number five indicate?

Arrival and departure!:

A newspaper report from 7th June 1866.

'Yesterday Moretonhampstead was brought into the circle of railway civilisation, when the S Devon Railway Co. with characteristic enterprise connected Moreton with Newton Abbot, opening up to visitors and tourists a delightful tract of country. Inauguration of the line: train starting from Newton Abbot at 11 o'clock attended by the Earl of Devon, Lord of the Manor of Moretonhampstead, and many dignitaries, with much rejoicing all along the line with immense crowds of people collecting at viewpoints to see the train and its passengers. Alighting amidst cheers at Moreton Station the directors and committee headed by the Newton band then marched into town where the streets had been decorated and the church bells rang merrily all day long. Tables were set out for the entertainment of the poor and the villagers attracted to the town by the festivities of the day. A luncheon was provided for the directors and their friends at the Unitarian schoolroom. The hosts of the White Hart and the White Horse being the caterers, where many patriotic toasts were drunk—to the directors of the Railway, to the health of the engineers, contractors and other officers, and to the prosperity of the town of Moreton'.

Unfortunately the line fell under the Beeching axe, and closed to passenger traffic on **28th February 1959**. It continued to be used for goods until this also ceased on **6th April 1964**.

Some facts and figures about the line: It was 12.5 miles long, and was started in August 1863, taking less than 34 months to complete, including all the bridges, cuttings and embankments.

How long would it take to build today?

Originally the line was broad gauge, as championed by Brunel, but was converted to standard gauge in 1892.

I do hope that you have enjoyed this latest edition of the Newsletter.

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