



moretonhampstead history society

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

This year's programme got off to a sparkling start with the Presidential address by Professor Ian Mercer CBE. He shared with us his profound knowledge of the history of Slapton Ley, interspersed with anecdotes from his personal experiences of setting up and running the pioneering field studies centre there.

From the Ley's periglacial origins, we were given a concise and lucid narrative accompanied by superb illustrations that brought to life the various but continuous phases of human occupation: Mesolithic hunter-gatherers, Iron-Age settlers, Anglo-Saxon farmers, Norman feudal lords, Medieval peasants, Victorian fishermen and US forces. Ian conjured up his own vivid memories such as seeing the wives of fishermen keeping look-out on the cliffs for shoals of mackerel and the hauling in of lucrative hauls for Good Friday.

The road across the Ley is only 150 years old and is now under some threat from rising sea levels & has already been breached once. However, thanks to an eccentric but benevolent owner, the 200 acres of land and 200 acres of water have been preserved and the field studies centre has been a great success with 100,000 visitors and a 1,000 articles written about the Ley. While the audience were agreed that Torr Cross is a great place not just for ice creams but also the best fish and chips in Devon!



SLAPTON LEY

NEWSLETTER

JANUARY 2012

February Meeting The history of my house

3 members of the History Society will each give us a short, illustrated history of their Moreton houses. Sian Colridge will be talking on The Union Inn, Ian Mercer on Ponsford House & Mike Warner on Pound Cottage. They all have a fascinating story to tell which we may inspire you to look into the past life of your home.

**Wednesday 15th February at the Union Inn
7.30 pm.**

New Year – New Ideas!



If anyone has been to a place that might be of interest to our members could you e-mail us about it? It could be a pub, house, church, village, museum, monument & not necessarily local & add a few words about what was special or interesting about it.

I would like to recommend somewhere we had passed hundreds of times: The Cowick Barton pub on Cowick Lane, Exeter. It is a red sandstone 16th century building with a large hall & 2 immense fireplaces full of Tudor atmosphere & the food was good too.



Would anyone be interested in occasional excursions to explore local churches with me? We always mean to go but so far have only been to Dunsford recently! We could combine more than one on a trip such as Bridford (dedicated to St Thomas Becket), Christow, and Hennock with a pub lunch at one of the villages. It could be on a Saturday or in the week. Let me know & then we can get together.

Judy Hardiman

Jubilee exhibition



'60 years on'

In the first week of June we are mounting a display in the Green Hill gallery to mark the Queen's Diamond Jubilee. Nationally there's a long-weekend of celebrations with a double Bank holiday on June 4th & 5th. In Moreton there will be some fun & games for adults and children, including a street party in Greenhill Square.

Our exhibition will centre on 2 main themes. What were Moreton & the surrounding parish like when the Queen inherited the throne 60 years ago – what's different & what hasn't changed. By contrast, what do we think that Moreton will be like in another 60 years time - what will change & what will remain the same?

- We would like to put together a team to find out about Moreton in 1952-3. It'll be on the same lines to the one that worked so successfully on the Green Hill display. We'll have an artist, Carol Harvey, to curate the exhibition & help with audio-visual ways to mount our display. There's already an interesting amount of material building up: Liz Prince has been interviewing farmers who remember those 'age of austerity' times. I've been working on a series of maps from a local diary kept then which shows all the shops & businesses in the town. Sian Colridge has found 18 photos of Moreton taken on June 28th 1952! Do let us know if you have any photos or memorabilia such as from the Coronation.



PHOTO: MIKE BOW (THE CHILD IN ARMS)

WATCHING THE CORONATION ON TV - WHAT IS THIS SHOP NOW???

- We would also like to ask for ideas on what it might be like in the year 2072! The primary school have agreed to take part & it would be fascinating to have a range of ideas from all ages, long-term & more recent residents, farmers & IT experts, optimists & pessimists etc. What will change & what will remain the same? Will there be a 3rd car park by then??

If you would like to take part in any way, please come to a meeting with Carol & myself at Green Hill on Monday 13th February at 7.30 pm or contact me if you can't make the meeting.

Bill Hardiman

News from the archives

The archive room at Green Hill is now equipped with shelving and a computer. We are making very good progress with a database that records all the files and photos we have and continue to acquire. This should be available for everyone to see online from Easter.

We have a few artefacts in the archives and this week one turned up right on cue. As they started to take down the current 'dancing tree', a piece of the original one that blew down in 1903 was found with the help of Gary Cox in the library where it was being used as a door stop!



PIECE OF ORIGINAL DANCING TREE

We are also building up our oral history archive. Last week Audrey Snell was recorded, as she talked about life in Moreton in the interwar years after she had seen the Old School Days' exhibition at Green Hill.

There have been nearly 300 visitors to the Green Hill exhibitions so far and last week they included the local MP. He was very impressed and wished us luck for the rest of the project. We gave him a copy of our 2012 programme and he hopes to come along to one of our meetings

If you would like to see the archive work in progress I am usually at Green Hill on Tuesdays between 2 and 5.30 pm. – please drop in and see some of the fascinating material we are discovering buried in the boxes and have recently been given!

Jackie Paxman

Histor-Ian's corner

A local authority search on 15 March 1963 on the sale of a property in Court Street reported as follows. To the request to, 'include any other matter that specifically affects the property' the response was given: 'The property is in an area of great landscape value and within the Dartmoor National Park. It is proposed to construct a new section of Principal Traffic Road to by-pass Moretonhampstead (and the property) to the south and west and when this has been done the section of Court Street on to which the property abuts will cease to be a Principal Traffic Road.'

I hope the purchasers did not buy the property in the expectation that the by-pass was going to be built any time soon – within the next fifty years. It seems that this road, like the extension of the railway to Chagford, was a traffic development doomed never to be.

Ian M, with thanks to Jacqui Lynch for the chance to copy this document

Ian Mortimer



PHOTO: SIAN COLRIDGE

A TRAFFIC-FREE COURT STREET IN 1952 – 'AGE OF AUSTERITY' OR 'THE GOOD OLD DAYS'?

Contributions welcome

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

Bill Hardiman
billmgs2001@hotmail.com