



Moretonhampstead History Society

Newsletter

July 2007

Visit to Tyntesfield House:

On Wednesday 30th May, on a rather wet day, a party of 17 of us headed off on the coach to Tyntesfield. The driver was given precise instructions on how to get there, as provided by The National Trust. He, however, preferred to rely instead on his 'Tom Tom'. electronic navigation system! As a result of this we had mystery tour of the lanes of North Somerset! We arrived almost an hour late and our planned 3 hour visit was reduced to a little over 2hours! It could only be extended by 15 minutes because of the lack of space for coaches. It was such a pity that this happened, bearing in mind all the hard work done by Wendy Coombes to put this trip together.

The house itself was magnificent, with much to see in the rooms available to us. Each room had its own room guide, and unlike most NT houses, each guide gave an unprompted, informative and comprehensive talk on 'their room'. I enjoyed the story about the wallpaper in the dining room. When the dining room was extended, they covered the walls in a very expensive hand blocked wallpaper. A floral design with a burgundy background intended to look like tooled Spanish leather. The new wallpaper, however made the room very dark. The family solved the problem by getting painters in to overpaint the burgundy background with white paint, using very small brushes to paint around the intricate patterns! The dining room is very large; one cannot even begin to estimate how long this would have taken to complete, or at what cost!

The large chapel in the grounds was equally impressive, although it was never consecrated, but that's another story! I'm sure we all enjoyed the visit, but I think it was a bit rushed for most of us. I'm sure that the gardens and glasshouses would also have been worth seeing, had there been more time.

Tyntesfield House



Answer to the June Picture Puzzle:



Location of the cross

Many of you recognised this as the original single entrance to Grimspound. There are over 5000 hut circles on Dartmoor, but I think this Bronze age site, of about 3000 years ago is the most impressive.

Why Grimspound? Well theories abound, in earlier times many considered it to be the work of the Devil. A Rev. Polwhele was the first to record the name in 1797. It can be a grim place certainly! Grimspound is located in a small valley between Hookney Tor and Hambledown, not far from Challacombe cross. There are about 24 hut circles, within an almost circular boundary wall. A substantial area of some 4 acres is contained within this wall, parts of which are hollow! Some excavation work was done in the 1890's by a group called the Dartmoor Exploration Committee. The work of this group and their methods would probably not be approved of by today's archaeologists. They actually 'restored' one of the huts, and put iron railings around it to protect it from the cattle and ponies! I'm glad to say that the iron railings have long since disappeared. A small stream runs through the site, although who knows if it did so 3000 years ago. Ian Mortimer told me about the cross, (see above picture re location) which is carved on one of the large gate stones. Some reports say it was put there to ward off the devil, others that it was done fairly recently by someone using a penknife! I visited Grimspound just a few days ago, and I think it looks too well carved to have been done in that way, and it is certainly well weathered. The lichen growth on it is consistent with that on the rest of the stone. When you next go to there check it out and make up your own mind. Grimspound is well worth a visit, or revisit if you have been before.

July Meeting:

Will be held as usual in the Community Club at 7.30pm on the 18th July. The subject will be:

Exeter's Buildings

The talk will be given by Mike Perriam, local historian and Dartmoor National Park Guide.

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

New Book:

I'm sure you will all be interested to know that our Chairman Ian Mortimer, has a new book out. This new book will be available from 5th July, and is entitled '**The Fears of Henry IV'-The life of England's self made king**'. This latest book is the third in his Historical Biography of England series. If you wish to purchase the book, it is available in hard back from Amazon on the internet at the bargain price of £12.53p (normally £18.99) or it can be ordered from any good bookseller. I'm sure Ian will be happy to sign any copies purchased by History Society Members at future meetings.

New School in Moreton– Update:

Well you know from last month's Newsletter that Mr Phillips was advertising his new boarding school 'open from lady day next'. The following entries are also about the school.

25th June 1835: "With feelings of gratitude for the liberal support he continues to receive from his friends, Mr Phillips begs to state that his school for the education of young gentlemen in Classics and Mathematics will reopen on Monday 27th of July next. In proof that the situation in Moretonhampstead is particularly healthful, it need only be said that during the whole of the passed year the assistance of no medical gentleman was required in the school."

Seems he managed to keep the children safe and well long before the era of 'health & safety'!

7th January 1836: "Mr Phillips Mathematical and Classical school will reopen on Monday the 20th day of January 1836. Mr P. embraces this opportunity to thank his numerous friends for their kind support and hopes by strict attention to the duties of the establishment and by unabated exertion to continue to merit their favours".

Would Mr Phillips have survived a visit by Ofsted Inspectors, I wonder?

Note: It seems that no one in the History Society can shed any light on the whereabouts of Mr. Phillip's School, or say if the building still exists. This may need some research, is there a volunteer?

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

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