



# Moretonhampstead History Society

## Newsletter

March 2010

### March Meeting:

This meeting will take place in the Stable bar of the Union Inn, on the 17th March 2010.

#### **'Exeter Cathedral: a Portrait in Decorated Gothic' by Mark Cottle**

Mark Cottle is an experienced lecturer in Anglo-Saxon, Medieval and Tudor history. This talk looks at the Medieval architecture and construction of Exeter Cathedral. Exeter may claim to be one of the finest examples of decorated architecture in Europe, and has been handed down to us relatively unscathed by conflict and time.

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

### February Meeting:

36 Members of the Society attended our meeting in the Community Club, on a cold and wet evening, to hear Jane Marchand, an Archaeologist from Dartmoor National Parks speak. The subject of her talk was 'Protecting Dartmoor's Past'. Jane began by speaking of the early threats in the late 18th & early 19th Century, when over 300 miles of enclosure walls were built. The builders often used stones from the hut circles. Long stones were also popular, and were often split to make farm gateposts! Stone was also taken from sites for road building from such places as Cranbrooke Castle. The planting of trees at sites such as Fernworthy has also obscured many important sites, and prevented us from seeing the relationships between circles. There are over 17,500 recorded archaeological sites on Dartmoor, but only some 2,500 are protected. DNPA continue to undertake conservation and restoration at the most important sites, but limited resources mean that very little site excavation takes place. The biggest problem they face today is the bracken, which not only obscures the sites, but its rhizomes can also disturb the artefacts that lie beneath. Another problem is theft, many stone crosses and other stone items, such as milestones, have been stolen in recent years. They now use microchips, hidden in cracks in the stones and glued in place. They are difficult to find, and do serve as a deterrent. Local parishes now request microchipping of their 'treasures', such as the stone troughs in Chagford. A similar request from Belstone Church led to the discovery of the Ancient Belstone Ring Cross. Research has been done, and it is now believed to date back to the 7th Century.

### Team 'Bus' Was A Hearse!!

The Western Times and Gazette newspaper reported in September 1952 that the Moreton Cricket Club had borrowed the hearse from the local undertaker to transport the team to an away match ! I recently uncovered the cutting and it reminded me of a first hand report I had of this story from one of the players, the late Owen Chudley. It appears that there were few car owners among the cricketers at the time and the committee hit upon the idea of approaching the undertaker who agreed that as long as it was not needed for a funeral, he would loan it out to the club. Owen was one of the players who travelled in the black, glass panelled vehicle for a match at Babbacombe . When the Babbacombe players saw the hearse entering their ground they naturally thought it had taken a wrong turning and the captain left the dressing room to inform the driver. Deathly matters were marked in a somewhat more sombre manner in those days and as the Babbacombe skipper approached the vehicle he removed his cap whilst his team mates left the changing room to stand in a silent line of respect, only to be greeted by the smiles and laughter of their Moreton opponents !! Owen used to say that with the players already changed into their cricket whites, the opposition must have thought eleven ghosts had turned up to play them !! Incidentally, the Club later purchased the hearse, and after some conversion work, used it for four or five seasons. **Gary Cox**

## Picture Puzzle:



There are many of these stone crosses to be found all over Dartmoor and the surrounding area. How old are they and what was their purpose? This one is quite close to Moretonhampstead. Do you know where?

## New Member:

We welcome to the Society **Godfrey Leech** who joined at our last meeting, Godfrey lives in Fore Street and we look forward to seeing him at future meetings.

## Update on our Website:

The History Society website has been re-launched. The internet address is still [www.moretonhampstead.org.uk](http://www.moretonhampstead.org.uk) but you will need to save it again, to your favourites/bookmarks when you first visit it again as we have changed the host server. The structure remains the same and we have mainly tried to give it an 'easier on the eyes' appearance. Over the next few weeks more graphics & visual materials will be put on and a number of sections will be built up e.g. 'education' will have searchable databases from the registers and extracts from the school-log book.

Merlin Howse, who now hosts the site, has put in a considerable amount of time to help re-develop the site and it is a great benefit for the 'web team' to work alongside such a local expert. Please let me know what you think of the revamped site, and I welcome any ideas or contributions for it.

**Bill Hardiman** - MHS website co-ordinator - e:mail: [billmgs2001@hotmail.com](mailto:billmgs2001@hotmail.com)

## April Meeting:

This meeting will be held on 21st April in the Community Club at 7.30pm.

### **George Eliot and History** **By** **Brian Spittles**

Brian Spittles, now a resident of Moreton and a History Society member, was head of Humanities at Ruskin College Oxford. He was responsible for courses in Literature, History & Film Studies. George Eliot's work is now best known for the television and cinema adaptations of her novels, notably *Middlemarch*, *Daniel Deronda* and *The Mill on The Floss*. But her life's work, and the controversial nature of her life encompass far wider interests –social history in particular.

Anyone can contribute; please send articles to: [christopher.pilkington@tesco.net](mailto:christopher.pilkington@tesco.net)