



Newsletter

March 2011

March Meeting:

The March meeting will take place in the Stable Bar of the Union Inn on Wednesday 16th March at 7.30pm

Thomas Hardy: Wessex Man

An illustrated talk by **Brian Spittles**, a Moreton resident, who was Head of Humanities at Ruskin College, Oxford.

Thomas Hardy's novels are still highly popular; several of them have been adapted for the television and cinema screens, including possibly the two most controversial novels of the Victorian period. He wrote very strong women characters, who partly reflect his own experience with powerful females. The novels also express Hardy's own fascination with history.

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

February Meeting:

John Risdon made a popular return to the History Society on 16th February with a well polished & historically inspiring talk about Greenway house and estate near Dartmouth. He lives close by & obviously has a great affection for the house & the estate. Besides the well-known connection with Agatha Christie & her family in recent times, John brought to life for us the previous owners. The original 16th century builder was Otho Gilbert, from a powerful family of nearby Compton Castle, & his wife, the well-connected Catherine Champernowne. She had two famous sons, Humphrey Gilbert &, from her second marriage, Walter Raleigh. Both were brought up at Greenway using the river Dart as their playground, grounding them in the skills of the sea. They became royal favourites who founded & consolidated lands in the New World such as Newfoundland & Virginia. Newfoundland was the first English possession in the Americas & was important because of the rich cod supplies, which were salted & stored at Kingswear.

Other Greenway owners continued to keep the close American connection, including an American owner Roope Harris Roope in 1780 & up to Agatha Christie, herself half American, who bought it for £6000 just before the war. The house is now owned by the National Trust, who have made extensive restorations to the house and gardens, where visitors can still appreciate the beautiful vistas seen by Walter Raleigh and Humphrey Gilbert over 500 years ago.

Judy Hardiman

Heriots and Farlieus & e-bay!

In response to Chris's appeal for items for inclusion in the newsletter, I thought a few lines would perhaps be of interest. I was prompted by hearing Prof Ian Mercer's entertaining talk "The President's Tale" - with many references to Dartmoor land. The word 'tenement' cropped up once or twice and this reminded me of my fairly recent initiation into the old land terminology of tenements, heriots and farlieus. In a visit last September to Poltimore House near Exeter, during the Heritage Open Days, I chatted with some of the Friends of Poltimore House, and in the course of conversation I mentioned I had done a small amount of transcription work on old documents held at Lanhydrock House in Cornwall, whilst on a National Trust working holiday. Keith Weedon (of the Friends) was pleased to hear this bit of information because as chance would have it, they had just

acquired two old documents with reference to Poltimore, and needed someone to look at them with a view to transcription. I said I would be happy to 'have a go'.

Thus it came to pass that I have had the privilege of holding, (with white gloves on, of course), reading, and with a little expert help, transcribing two fairly ancient Indentures dated 1690 and 1780 respectively. They both refer to land in North Molton owned by the Bampfyldes of Poltimore. The 1690 document was the greater challenge to decipher and had several words unknown to me as 'legal shorthand' and feudal phrases such as 'suit and service' and the tenements, heriots, farlieus, houseboote, ploughboote and yeateboote, but I was fortunately given some guidance and help from University experts to enable me to complete the transcription.

The 1780 document is much clearer to read, being by that time written in the elegant copperplate style with which I was familiar from the Lanhydrock letters I had worked upon. I have enjoyed tackling this task, and if further Poltimore papers are acquired in the future, it will be a chance to learn more.

The amusing footnote is that these ancient documents were purchased on e-bay ! How times have changed since the huge indentures were laboriously written out by quill pen.

Mary Townsend

Editors Note: Heriots, Farlieus, Houseboote, Ploughboote, and Yeatboote? A great insight from Mary into the world of ancient documents, but perhaps you are wondering what these words mean? I have searched the internet, but only found Heriot.

Heriot: A death duty paid by villeins and free tenants to their Lord, often consisting of the dead man's best beast or chattel. As to the others –can anyone else help, I wonder?

[The Cross Tree;](#)

The Parish Council have been advised that the 'Cross Tree' has honey fungus and must be felled. They have asked the History Society for their views as to how they should progress once this is done.

This site, as most know, is also the site of the ancient market cross, which is in pieces. The plinth is also in need of repair and the plinth is a Grade2 listed monument. At one time the plinth also had iron railings around it.

The issues are not straightforward.

Should the tree be replaced with another one if so, what type? A new tree would invariably, in time, damage the plinth again. So should we not have a tree, but just focus attention on the Market Cross aspect of the site and rebuild that? The Market Cross, has probably been there since the early 13th Century, and predates any tree. However the 'tree' aspect of the site does have considerable heritage value. It is known as the Cross Tree, and we are all familiar with the story of the band playing in the tree, and the dancing that took place. This could also be acknowledged by way of an information board? Should we also like to see the railings back in place? We have old photos that show what they were like.

If you have a view on this please email or telephone our chairman Bill Hardiman by 24th March. His telephone number is 01647 441083 and email address billmgs2001@hotmail.com. Bill will collate any replies and forward our collective views to the Parish Council.

Note: A report on the subject of the Cross Tree from Malcolm Chudley, who writes on behalf of the Parish Council is also being sent out with this Newsletter.

[April Meeting:](#)

This meeting will take place on Wednesday 13th April (second Wednesday in the month, not the third one) at 730pm in the **Parish hall**

[Archive Films of the South West & Moretonhampstead](#)

South West Film & Television Archive will show archive film covering a variety of West Country subjects with about the last 20 minutes dedicated to Moretonhampstead.

We anticipate that this will be a popular event so please arrive in good time.

[Non members of the Society are very welcome to join us for a donation of £4 payable at the door](#)

Chris Pilkington.