



Moretonhampstead History Society

Newsletter

May 2007

May Meeting:

This will take place on Wednesday 16th May. It will be a visit to Great Fulford House, the 16th Century Manor House of Television fame. The house is near the village of Dunsford. We shall **meet in Court Street car at 6.30pm** in order to sort out cars and passengers, and leave by 6.40pm. If you would like a lift, or can offer a place in your car please let Wendy Coombes know on 277580 or by email to: wcoombes@eclipse.co.uk. There will be a charge of **£5** per person for this visit.

Act quickly, we have very few places left!

Ian Mortimer writes:

If you have never seen this house before, have no doubt: this is an opportunity not to be missed. Francis Fulford, the present owner, is the only man in Devon who can claim to be living on the same estate as his direct ancestor at the time of Domesday. The current house is late medieval, remodelled in the seventeenth century to be a stately home and altered again about 1800. Since then not much has happened to the fabric, apart from bits falling down here and there. It has simply lingered in its own quiet valley, overlooking its lake. Thus the really extraordinary thing about this house is the way it has slipped almost unnoticed into the twenty-first century. It is not like a National Trust stately home: all neat and pickled for the public to wander around. But nor is it like a house which has ever been vacated. Fine old paintings line the walls – including a fantastic full-length portrait of Charles I – and ancient carvings adorn the hall. In other places, pieces of plaster work have fallen down revealing blocked medieval windows. When the ceiling above the great staircase fell down in 1800, the then owner simply walled it up – and it remained sealed off for a hundred years. As a house it is extraordinary, eccentric and unlike any other you will ever see. Francis is no less a character (equally extraordinary and eccentric...), and he will be our guide. Stand by for stories of Fulford ancestors rescuing maidens in distress from Saracens and Civil War shenanigans!

Visit to Tyntesfield - 30th May 2007

The Coach (Harveys 33 seater) will depart at 8.30am **sharp** from the Court Street car park. Please make sure that you are punctual as our visit is booked for a specific time slot which we must be there for. Those who are members of the National Trust, remember to bring your membership card.

There are still a number of places available on the coach for this very worthwhile trip. Please contact Wendy Coombes on 277580. It's not too late!

April Meeting:

Our meeting was held on the 18th of the month in the Community Club. The meeting was attended by 33 members. Well known local man Dave Wills gave a very interesting and sometimes amusing talk about the creation of the Reservoirs at Hennock. His family connections with the area go back a long way. Dave's Great Grandfather owned Pool Mill which was situated below the current Trenchford Dam, and his grandfather became Water Bailiff at the reservoirs. The first dam was built at Tottiford in 1861. The construction of the Kennick Reservoir, above the Tottiford dam followed, and was completed in 1885. Increasing demand for water led to the building of a third dam at Trenchford in 1905. An early photograph showed a rather stark view of a treeless Trenchford. A planting programme began soon after, and Dave's father was one of two men employed to propagate and plant the trees we see there today. Dave also spoke fondly of his Uncle Alfie, (born 1901) who went to school at Lustleigh. On leaving school he worked at the Tenchford water treatment plant. Alfie was, despite a lack of formal

education, a clever man, and kept fascinating accounts of everyday life around the reservoirs in the early 20th Century, all penned in the most elaborate script, which we were able to see. We thank Dave for his very informative and enjoyable talk.

Lawless Times!

Some extracts from the court reports for 4th and 25th July 1877.

'Captain Robert Lamping of Drewsteignton, was summoned for allowing two dogs to be at large and not under control. Sergeant Tippet, said on the 15th June last he was on duty at Drewsteignton, and he saw two dogs come along a road with no one with them, but shortly after the defendant came on in his carriage, and he asked him whether they were his dogs, and he replied in the affirmative. The dogs were at one time 150yards ahead of the defendant, and they paid no attention to his whistling them, and neither of them was muzzled. Fined 1s and costs'

'John Dodd, a labourer, of Chagford, was summoned for refusing to quit licensed premises at Drewsteignton and for assaulting PC Brock at the same place on 2nd June last whilst in the execution of his duty. The defendant pleaded guilty, and was fined 5s for the first offence and £1 for the latter.'

'William Dodd, a brother of the last defendant, was summoned for resisting the police in the execution of his duty on the 2nd June last at Drewsteignton. Fined 10s and costs.'

'Bridget Dilvert, a tramp, was charged with being drunk and incapable in Moreton on the night of the 17th instant, and was sent to prison for seven days, **for which she returned thanks to his worship.**'

Bridget may well have been grateful for the custodial sentence. The prospect of somewhere to sleep and probably food would have been welcomed by someone in her situation.

Even in more recent times it was not unusual for the destitute to commit minor offences 'in exchange' for a warm cell in a police station and breakfast in the morning! Take my word for it!

The Romans in Moreton!

The 'stop press' attachment to the Newsletter sent out on the **1st April** by email did catch some of you out, as a number of responses I had indicated. I'm glad to say it was all taken in good part, such a pity that it was not true! For the benefit of those without email, this was the '**spoof**':

Dear Members,

Please find attached your Newsletter for April.

Stop Press!!!

Such exciting news that it cannot wait until the next Newsletter!!

'Remains of a Roman Villa have just been discovered near the new school site!! Apparently most of the mosaic floor is very well preserved and is very beautiful. Ian has asked that we keep this news to ourselves at this early stage, but we they will need local help with the excavation and cataloguing of the finds, and that is why we are the first to hear about it! There is a press embargo, at the request of the Archaeologists from Exeter University, they want to keep it quiet until the site can be secured, thereby ensuring its' integrity. You may well be contacted in the near future to help with this exciting project!

More news on this later.

Chris Pilkington.'

email

If you have do have an email address, that you have not already provided, please contact me, by email or by telephone (details given below) I can then add you to the email list.

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

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