



# Moretonhampstead History Society

## Newsletter

May 2008

### April Meeting:

This meeting was held on 16th April at our usual venue; over 40 members were present to hear Mike Perriam speak about Dartmoor from the 'ice age to the Romans on Dartmoor'. In fact, he started a good deal further back, about 400million years ago when Great Britain was close to the Equator! His talk about the formation of Dartmoor was well illustrated with numerous pictures. I was unaware that there were pockets of limestone in addition to the granite that is so familiar to us all. The limestone caves at Buckfastleigh could be worth a visit, perhaps you would see some of the bones of the animals that perished there some 30,000 years ago. In the Neolithic and Bronze age, it seems, it was much warmer than now, and farming of crops took place, quite impossible now! Spinster rock is one of the few burial chambers of the Neolithic period; although, as Mike Explained, it would have originally been covered with earth, and not as visible as it is today. Much of what we see today in terms of stone circles, hut circles, cairns, stone rows, etc is apparently bronze age. Mike also spoke about the sophisticated system of boundaries known as reeves, built some thousands of years ago, which would have required considerable manpower to construct. No one can say how many people then lived on Dartmoor, there are over 6000 hut circles, but we cannot be sure they were all occupied at the same time. As for the Romans, well, this was a bit of a tease as there is no evidence of occupation on Dartmoor at all, although they would have used the metals mined there.

### May Meeting:

#### **A Guided tour of the Bishop's Palace Gardens and Cathedral Close. Wednesday, 21st May, 2008**

The tour will be led by an Exeter Red Coat Guide and has been arranged for the Society. The Bishop of Exeter has given permission for us to view the Palace Gardens on this evening.  
The maximum number of people we can take is 30. I shall need final numbers by **Monday, 5th May.**

### The arrangements are as follows:

We start from the West Front of the Cathedral at **6.00 pm.**

The tour will go ahead whatever the weather. If there is any doubt on the day (that is, if it is raining very heavily) please phone me for confirmation. The tour will last approximately one and a half hours.

The cost is £2.50 per person. Please bring your payment with you on the evening. (Cheques should be made out to Moretonhampstead History Society). The Palace Gardens are largely flat and provide easy walking.

The nearest public car parks are Mary Arches Street, and Cathedral and Quay:

Payment at Mary Arches Street is made by ticketed barrier. The cost for an evening's parking is £1.00.

Payment at Cathedral and Quay is 'Pay and Display'. The charging period ends at 6.00 pm. The charge between 5.00 and 6.00 pm is 70 pence.

Please contact me if you need, or can provide, transport. Those sharing transport will leave from Court Street Car Park **promptly at 5.10 pm.**

If the tour is over-subscribed, then preference will be given to members of the History Society.

Wendy Coombes

### Picture Puzzle:

This should be an easy one, you may not recognise the location, but surely the building type will be familiar? If you can provide the location as well as the purpose, then I shall be doubly impressed!



### New Members:

I'm pleased to report that we gained three new members at our last meeting. **Hazel Phillips** from North Bovey, and **Geoff & Audrey Gooding** who live in The Glebelands here in Moreton.

A warm welcome to you, we look forward to seeing you at future meetings and on future trips. That makes **23** new members so far this year!!

### July Meeting:

Unfortunately, the members of the Southwest Film and Television Archive are unable to make a presentation of their material this year. Restricted funding has meant that their work is confined to research and maintaining the archive. They hope to be able to come to us next year, if funding allows. A replacement speaker is being booked for our July meeting.

### Calamitous and Destructive Fire-17August 1854

Eleven houses in Court Street and ten in Pound Street were destroyed, and upwards of 90 families deprived of their habitation. It was first discovered about 2 o'clock in the morning— a person then fortunately awakening and, seeing a great light, he quickly aroused his neighbours to a sense of danger. Happily there has been no loss of human life, but the distress of many persons is great. The fire broke out in a stable occupied by Mr John Weekes, carrier, in the curtilage between Court Street and Pound Street, and the stable being so close to each street, and the houses covered with thatch, both streets were quickly in flames as also the outbuildings and the carpenters workshop. Every effort was made to arrest the progress of the fire; two town engines placed in Pound Street and Court Street. The supply of water was at first scanty, but was increased by resorting to neighbouring brooks. To prevent the spread of fire, men were also judiciously stationed on the opposite side of Pound Street (the wind blowing from the North and East), brushing off and extinguishing. After the most strenuous exertions of several hours the fire was got under. The horses belonging to Mr Weekes in the stable were with the greatest difficulty got out, but a horse in another stable was burnt to death. The house property was insured but much of the household goods belonging to many of the occupants (being of labouring class) were not. A subscription is set on foot to relieve the distress of the poorer class of sufferers. It is not known how the fire originated. In consequence of a report in circulation that the fire was the work of an incendiary, an inquest was commenced at the White Hart.—**Exeter Flying Post**

Editors Note: 21 houses destroyed, and up to 90 families homeless, that's an average of over 4 families per house!!

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