



Moretonhampstead History Society

Newsletter

May 2010

May Meeting:

This meeting will be held on **19th May in the Stable Bar of The Union Inn at 7.30pm.**

The Vikings In Devon By Derek Gore

Derek Gore is a teaching Fellow in the Archaeology Department of Exeter University, and has published works on the Romans and the Vikings in Devon. His talk last year on the Romans brought this period of history alive, and was extremely well received. We are pleased to welcome him back to tell us more about the Vikings

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

April Meeting:

Our April meeting saw the Community Club filled for a talk by one of our members, Brian Spittles, on George Eliot (1819-1880, *née* Mary Anne Evans). Most people know of Eliot as the author of such books as *The Mill on the Floss* (1860), *Silas Marner* (1861), *Daniel Deronda* (1876) and her masterpiece, *Middlemarch* (1871-2). But few of us appreciate quite how remarkable a woman she was. Brian expertly demonstrated that, despite all the usual prejudices we associate with the Victorian era, there really were quite a few women writers but none who could match Eliot. As he himself remarked, she alone would figure on a list of the three greatest women of her age and the three greatest novelists. More than that, she overcame the prejudices of her own family, as well as society, living 'in sin' with a married man, George Lewes, for twenty years. Born relatively poor and with no great looks to help her, she raised herself through learning, intelligence and sheer force of character to become a journalist and a novelist. The loss of faith for her was a tumultuous event – which resulted in estrangement from her father – but then a few days after his funeral she went to live in Geneva alone (another strange move for a young woman in the nineteenth century). By the end of her life she was famous, wealthy and widely respected despite breaking so many conventions. She capped it all at the end by marrying a man twenty years younger than her, shortly before her death at the age of 61.

We are all very grateful to Brian for such an inspiring and thought-provoking introduction to Eliot, and for answering the many questions that followed. - **Ian Mortimer**

Before the Magistrates:

On the 9th May 1877. George Pillar, labourer and William Cornish, a road contractor, both of Dunsford, were charged, the former with stealing a bundle of hay from a rick, and the latter for receiving the same, well knowing it to have been stolen. Mr Floud of Exeter, appeared for Cornish, and Pillar was undefended. Mr Francis Hellier, a farmer, of Dunsford, stated that the prisoner Pillar, was in his employ as a farm labourer, and he had a rick of hay in a field called Broad meadow, and having of late missed a quantity of hay therefrom, as well as fowls from his farm, he gave information the Police, and the hay now produced by PC Brock is the same sort, and corresponded with that in the rick. PC Brock stated that from information he received from the last witness on the night of the 2nd April last, he watched the houses of both prisoners, who lived opposite each other, and about 9 o'clock he saw the prisoner Pillar come out of his house, with a pick and go in the direction of the field called Broad meadow where the rick was and return with two bundles, one of which he left inside the field gate, and the other he carried to a linhay in the prisoner Cornish's yard, and went and knocked to

Cornish's door and left, and in a few seconds.Cornish opened his door and went to his linhay, and took up the bundle of hay. He then charged him with receiving the hay knowing it to have been stolen, and afterwards took Pillar into custody and charged him with stealing it, and when before Mr Hellier, they asked to be forgiven. Both prisoners pleaded guilty by the advice of the advocate, and Mr Floud addressed the bench in mitigation of the offence, and said he could not but help saying the police constable had acted with very great tact in this matter, and it was very hard farmers who left their property unprotected should be robbed in this manner, but unfortunately his client had been led into temptation for which he was now very sorry, and he trusted the Bench would deal as leniently as possible with them. The Bench after a short consultation sentenced both prisoners to one calendar month each, hard labour.

Editors note:Interesting that Cornish was represented by an Advocate, but not Pillar -no legal aid in those days!

Membership & Meeting Venues:

The total number of members of the Society is now **85**. This figure includes two honorary members who both live in the USA. This total represents a slight fall on last years' membership. Several former members have moved away from the district, but on the plus side we are still attracting new members. We are still the largest group in Moreton and surrounding area, and attendance at our regular meetings remains high. On this note, the committee has now finally decided to phase out the use of the Community Club for our meetings in favour of the Stable Bar at the Union Inn. Increased numbers attending the meetings necessitates this change. Some problems experienced there last year regarding sound levels have been resolved. Wendy Coombes does a great job organising speakers and visits, but if you have any ideas regarding future speakers or places we could visit next year, I'm sure she would be very pleased to hear from you.

Field Trips/Visits to houses etc:

As was the practice last year, we shall reimburse drivers who take other members on our organised trips. The rate will be 40p per mile and can be claimed back from Jeanette Webster our Treasurer. Obviously this only applies to drivers who are taking members other than their own family, or prefer, for other reasons to make their way independently.

Visit to Ugbrooke House in June:

On the afternoon of the 16th June we have our first excursion of the year! A visit to Ugbrooke House near Chudleigh. We will be car sharing, so we can cater for those without transport.

Please see the enclosed leaflet, which gives more details, and a form to book your place on this trip.

Do please make an effort to go. I know that a lot of work goes on behind the scenes to make all the arrangements, and it is a little disappointing if such outings are not well supported.

Volunteer wanted:

We are looking for a volunteer from the membership, preferably someone who has previous experience of audio typing. That is someone who could transcribe some audio material into text. We want to do this so that we then have a written record as a word document that can then be kept on computer, reproduced and also stored in our archive in a more usable format. If you are able to help with this, do please contact me. It would be very much appreciated.Chris Pilkington on 01647 440503.