



Moretonhampstead History Society

Newsletter

Nov 2008

November Meeting:

This will take place in the Community Club on 19th November at 7.30pm.

'The Archaeology of the Princesshay Project'

The speaker will be Peter Stead, from Exeter City Council's Archaeology Team. He will describe and illustrate some of the findings unearthed during the excavations for the new Princesshay Shopping Centre.

October Meeting: AGM

This took place on Wednesday 17th Oct in the Stable Bar of the Union Inn. 35 members attended, about a third of the Membership, which now stands at 96. Proceedings were efficiently conducted by our President Ian Mercer. The Chairman, Ian Mortimer, gave a review of the years activities. The Society's very varied programme was a great success, thanks mainly to the hard work of Wendy Coombes, our Programme Secretary. There being no volunteers for the post of secretary she has agreed to cover that role as well! The Committee next year will be: Ian Mortimer(Chairman), Wendy Coombes (Programme Secretary & Secretary) Jeanette Webster(Treasurer), Chris Pilkington (Newsletter) Edward Pike, Edward Hobson, and a most welcome addition, Liz Prince. The evening was rounded off with an excellent photo quiz devised by Ian; which was won emphatically by a team consisting of Gary Cox, Ian & Pam Mercer, and Alastair Wimberley.

Meeting on 2nd October

"Facing the Challenge – a National Trust Perspective on climate change"

The History Society hosted a meeting on the above in St Andrews Church. Adrian Colston, the Property Manager of The National Trust in Devon, spoke about climate change, and the likely effects, based on the various scientific models, and supporting evidence that had been produced by numerous scientists working in this field. Some of the information Adrian provided was somewhat alarming, but he did finish on an optimistic note, which was reassuring to some, at least!

Our Chairman, Ian Mortimer spoke prior to the main speaker, seeking to put into context the problems the planet has now in terms of its ever increasing population, using more and more of the finite resources of the earth, at an ever increasing rate. He pointed out that there have been 9 billion 'people years' since 1008 and 50% of those are since 1908!

In the second part of his talk, Adrian spoke about some of the Projects he was pursuing, aimed at reducing the National Trust's carbon footprint, not to mention the spiralling energy costs they face. Castle Drogo, for instance, consumes an astonishing 8000litres of oil per month! They are installing a wood burning boiler, this will run on wood from their own resources. They are also seeking to re-establish the Hydro electric scheme on the Teign. There are many problems to be overcome before the latter can be achieved, relating to planning and water extraction. Many members will know that the original scheme was one of Lutyens innovations, and installed when the Castle was built, providing one of the first hydro electric schemes in the country. (I think the first may have been at Craggside in Northumberland). The generator building is still there, it would be great to see it in use again.

It was perhaps a little disappointing that only 50 people attended, despite widespread advertising, and numerous personal invitations being sent out.

Picture Puzzle - Answer:



The photograph is one of the Devonport Leat, one of the best examples of the many leats on Dartmoor. It was constructed in the 1790's to supply water to Devonport. It still works well today, and although it no longer runs the whole way to Devonport, it remains a supply source, terminating in the Burrator reservoir! It's a fantastic piece of water engineering, now well over 200 years old. Its route can be followed from its start point, just north of Wistmans wood, where it draws its first 'feed' from the West Dart. There are many interesting features including a tunnel, waterfall and an aqueduct (over the River Meavy). The aqueduct is rather utilitarian, and not to the same construction standards of the rest of the leat, but fulfils its purpose. Other features include sluices, single slab bridges and sheep leaps. My photograph shows part of the Devonport Leat close to Two Bridges, where it comes out of a small forest, looking north towards Wistmans Wood (Map ref SX605766) near Beardown Farm. The leat is quite a narrow channel, perhaps 3 feet wide, but it has an abundance of fish, some of which are quite large!! The day I was there, contractors were undertaking some minor repairs to some of the stonework, reassuring to know that it is being actively maintained!

From The Exeter Flying Post:

' There is now living and of good health in the town of Moretonhampstead a man named W. Tozer, by trade a shoemaker; he is in his 88th year, can read small print without the assistance of spectacles, and about three weeks since, walked from this city to that town, a distance of 12 miles, in four hours, including the time he refreshed at a public house on the way. The old man exhibited no symptoms of fatigue and declared he felt himself fully equal to the task of returning again on foot to Exeter, on the same day if it had been necessary.'
4th August 1827.

Well done Mr Tozer! How many, even much younger people living in Moreton today could match that? Remember the road to Exeter was unlikely to have been as well surfaced then as it is now.

Annual Christmas Dinner:

The History Society Annual Christmas Dinner will take place on **Wednesday 17th Dec** in the Stable Bar of the Union Inn at 7 for 7.30 pm. The cost is expected to be £15 per person. Full details will be given on the booking form which will be sent out later in November, we hope as many of you as possible will attend.

Subscriptions - Reminder:

Your annual subscription is now due. **£10** for a single membership and **£15** for two members living at the same address. Do, please, let our treasurer, have your subscription either cash or a cheque made out to 'Moretonhampstead History Society'. Jeanette will be available at the next meeting to take these.