



Moretonhampstead History Society

Newsletter

November 2009

November Meeting:

Our speaker in November is Dr Todd Gray. Many of our members will remember Todd Gray's talk last year when he debunked a good number of the myths surrounding Devon's history, including the first Queen Elizabeth's failure to sleep in any of our noble houses and Francis Drake's lack of patronage of the Ship Inn in Exeter. This time Todd will be talking about

'Dolly Mops and Lady girls: Victorian Prostitutes in Devon'

It should be well worth hearing!

We meet on **Wednesday, 18th November in The Union Inn at 7.30 pm.**

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

October Meeting: AGM

26 members attended the AGM, which was held at the Union Inn. The Chairman, Ian Mortimer, reviewed the activities of the Society during the previous year. He has been in post for some 5 years and said that this coming year would be his last as chairman. He also explained that Wendy Coombes now undertook the roles of Secretary and Programme Secretary and asked that a volunteer should come forward to take over as Secretary. The workload is minimal.

Wendy had put together the programme for 2010, which was the sixth programme she had planned, and she wished to step down during the forthcoming year. It would be helpful if someone could shadow Wendy during the next few months so that they could take over the programme for 2011. The Committee all were thanked for their help during the year.

Following the AGM there was a general knowledge quiz about Devon. There were 70 questions, 2 teams tied for first place by scoring 41/70 and shared the prizes – bottles of wine and a copy of 'The fears of Henry IV' written by Ian.

[A Moreton Character:](#)

The following story comes from the husband of History Society member Sandra Bond, Jack; who in March of this year celebrated his 100th birthday!

There may be few people around today who remember Butcher Dommett who ran a butchery business probably from the same premises which is a butcher's today. He employed 2 men and an errand boy. They helped run the shop and deliver meat. His method of business was to go in his pony and trap at the beginning of the week soliciting orders from the surrounding villages which included Dunsford. He was a huge man weighing around eighteen stone, wheezing and short of breath, smelling of whisky but always cheerful and energetic. He was well known for miles around Moreton and used to claim that he never went past a public house if it were open.

When I was about 10 or 11, at the time shortly after the end of the first World War, I well remember sitting at our kitchen table of a winter's evening, writing or reading by the light of an oil lamp, with Mother preparing the evening meal on the old black range when a commotion could be heard outside. The door would burst open and Butcher Dommett would be in the kitchen. The conversation would go something like this.

"Ullo Missus, how be ee? You do look as purty as I zeed ee last time! Now what can I put ee down for? Us ave got some lovely lamb. Is proper I tell ee! Or ow about a little bit of beef. The old man would welcome that."

"Us be having pork this weekend." said Mother "but you can put me down for 1/2lb of sausages and 1/2lb of

suet”

Once he had an order he snapped his notebook shut said “Goodnight to ee, Missus” and noticing me for the first time said “Goodnight, young whippersnapper ”

Around about that time this story circulated from Moreton. Most people believed it was true. My mother certainly did and never bought another sausage from Butcher Dommett in her life. It was said that Butcher Dommett told the story himself.

The story goes like this. A Moreton woman had a son about to leave school at age fourteen and she thought it would be good if he went into the butchery business so it was arranged that the boy should start with Butcher Dommett as errand boy. His mother instructed her son to do everything Butcher Dommett told him so that he made a good impression. The boy was in the shop bright and early Monday morning and at once asked Butcher Dommett what he should do. He was told to get a bucket of hot water and scrub the blocks and knives. This the boy did, then went to Butcher Dommett who was talking to two customers and asked what to do next.

Impatiently, Butcher Dommett told him to pick up all the little bits of meat off the floor, wipe off the sawdust and put the meat in the sausage machine. This the boy did and once more went to Butcher Dommett and asked what he should do next. Somewhat annoyed Butcher Dommett said “Cor damn the boy! Go up and stick your ass out of the window!” and turned to talk to his customers. Shortly after the customers were gone Butcher Dommett said, “Where’s that damn boy?”

His assistant said “He went upstairs like you said.”

“The silly, young devil! I didn’t mean him to go up there.” replied Butcher Dommett

He went to the foot of the stairs and called out, “Boy, you up there?”

The boy replied, “Yes Mister Dommett.”

“Then come on down!”

The boy came down the stairs buttoning up his trousers .

Butcher Dommett demanded, “What you bin doing up there, boy?”

The boy replied, “Like you said, Mr Dommett.”

“You didn’t stick your ass out the window?”

“That’s what you told me to do.”

“Cor damn the boy! Did anyone zee ee?”

“Yes Mr Dommett”

Who zeed ee?”

“The vicar’s wife.”

“Did her say ort?”

“Yes, Mr Dommett .Her looked up and said “Good Morning Mr Dommett!””

There may be some people in Moreton who know this story and a little more of his history. My knowledge more or less ends in 1927 but he was around in 1936 when he gave me a wedding present. He was indeed a great character and there are few around like him today. — **Jack Bond, Dunsford.**

[Annual Christmas Dinner:](#)

The History Society Annual Christmas Dinner will take place on **Wednesday 16th Dec** at The Ring O Bells, North Bovey at 7 for 7.30 pm. The cost is will be £17.50p per person. Full details are given on the **booking form** which will be sent out with this Newsletter, we hope as many of you as possible will attend.

[Some more on the Tozers:](#)

You may recall the piece I did in the August newsletter, regarding the Tozers. This prompted a response from member John Slater of Howton Farm, Great Howton, as follows:

‘You may be interested in information about the Tozers who owned Howton farm Great Howton - including ornamental plasterwork dated 1634 carrying their names etc which is in our house and which has been professionally restored. We have had a bit of historical research carried out on both the architectural development of the house over the centuries and the Tozer family who owned it up until the late 19th century. This was carried out with the support of Dartmoor National Park’. I am hoping to find out more from John in due course.