



## Newsletter

Sept 2010

### September Meeting:

Our next meeting will be held on Wednesday 15th September at 7.30pm in the Stable Bar of the Union Inn. The Subject will be:

#### **Devon Water Mills**

#### **Speaker - Martin Watts**

Martin Watts is a traditional millwright and corn milling specialist from Cullompton. He has carried out extensive research into historic water mills and their associated buildings and locations. He has many interesting photographs of the County's old mills.

### July - Visit to Kelly Mine

Like many of our members, perhaps, I often drive along the A382 towards Bovey Tracy. Just beyond the Lustleigh turning where the road turns sharp right into a narrow section you may have noticed a little hut next to the road. On 16th July members of the History Society visited the Kelly mine, and saw the wealth of industrial heritage that lay behind that rather inconsequential hut.

We were the guests of the Kelly Mine Preservation Society, who gave us a most interesting and comprehensive tour of this extensive site. We split into two groups, and were given a guided tour of the site by two Kelly Society members. The ore mined at Kelly was Micaceous Haematite, mainly used in the production of rust resistant paint, but also used to make black lead for fire grates and 'pounce' for drying ink on paper. This material was used on the Eiffel Tower, the Sidney Harbour Bridge and, more locally, on Brunel's Tamar Bridge. Kelly was one of 12 mines known to exist in the Wray Valley. All the mines were small scale operations employing just a few local miners at each.

The first records of mining at Kelly go back to 1797, but at its peak it was producing about 200tons per year of pure, high value ore. It's known locally as 'shiny ore', easy to see why when you visit Kelly, most of the ground around the site 'sparkles' as a result of the ore which has settled there.

In 1947 the Kelly mine ceased production, and it closed officially in 1951. Unlike most other mines, the machinery was left in situ, but the site continued to deteriorate until, in 1984, the Kelly Mine Preservation Trust was formed. They took over the site, which by this time was in a very parlous state, and began restoring it. Buildings have been rebuilt from scratch, waterwheels restored, not to mention hundreds of metres of mini rail track. Their work continues, but what they have achieved to date is quite remarkable. The entire system of production of the material from mining to final product can now be demonstrated to visitors. Numerous processes are involved, many devoted to maximising the amount of saleable material that is gleaned from the mined material, using a number of separate procedures. Very little material ended up in spoil heaps as a result of an elaborate recycling system.

The most dramatic demonstration during our visit was operation of the Californian stamping machine, driven by an ancient stationary engine, used to crush larger pieces of ore bearing rock.

Mining is as always, a dangerous job, wherever it is carried out. One well documented fatality at Kelly was that of George Drewitt, aged 28years, from Lustleigh. George was working at the bottom of the 80ft shaft when he was struck by a truck full of ore which fell from the top.

If you missed the opportunity to visit during the open day last week, then do, please, look out for the date of the next one in the press and on posters, its well worth seeing this very local and unique piece of local industrial heritage.

Our thanks once again go to Wendy Coombes for organising our third, and final, successful excursion for 2010.

### [Picture Puzzle:](#)

Low water levels at one of our local reservoirs have revealed an ancient historical feature, as this photograph shows.



No prizes for identifying the reservoir, but what is the feature so rarely revealed?

### [Newspaper Report 30th December 1813:](#)

'To be sold by public auction the fee simple and inheritance of and in those 7 tenements with a large drying loft, stables and other outhouses, courtilage with a lead pump, large garden, called Egypt, now in the several possessions of Alexander Hutchings, Andrew Langworthy, John Greenslade, Henry Luxton and others, situated near the Corn market in Moretonhampstead. The premise are extremely well adapted for a woollen manufactory or any other business requiring room, and there are a great number of weavers residing in the town. They extend 75ft on the front on the South towards the street, 223ft on the East, 71ft on the North, and 205ft on the West. (to be sold by Auction, Saml Gray, New Inn, Tues Jan 11th next).

Editors note:

Clearly a substantial premises, from the dimensions given, I wonder who bought it, and for what it was eventually used?

I also wonder why a place here in Moretonhampstead was known as 'Egypt'? I have heard of Egypt Court which used to be a row of Weavers Cottages demolished to make way for the new part of the primary school next to the church in 1962.

### [October Meeting: AGM & Social Evening](#)

Our October meeting will take place in the Stable Bar of the Union Inn, on Wednesday 20th October at 7.30pm. This meeting will begin as usual with the **AGM**. Do, please, make every effort to attend this meeting, the formalities of the AGM are soon dealt with and this will be followed by a Quiz, which Gary Cox has kindly agreed to organise.

Prior to the meeting members will be sent minutes of the previous AGM, and the agenda for this one.

Please note: **From the date of the AGM your annual subscription becomes due.**

£10 for a single membership & £15 for two persons at the same address.

Please be prompt with this payment, for the sake of the Membership Secretary, last time it took over 6 months to collect all the subscriptions!