

February 2013

NEXT MEETING

WEDNESDAY 20TH FEBRUARY

'A FACT STRANGER THAN FICTION'

In 1585 Sir Walter Raleigh and Sir Richard Grenville set up the first English Colony in America on the island of Roanoke. Just 3 years later it had vanished and still today remains one of America's greatest mysteries. Andy Powell, former Mayor of Sir Richard Grenville's home town Bideford, re-investigates what happened. Union Inn 7.30 pm



A detail from a map in the 1590 edition of Thomas Hariot's 'Briefe and True Account of the New Found Land of Virginia'.

MHS subscriptions are now due. Still only £10 for an individual and £15 for a couple. Please make your cheque payable to 'Moretonhampstead History Society'. If you cannot make the next meeting please post it to:
Jeannette Webster 26 Forder Meadow
Moretonhampstead TQ13 8JB

PRESIDENT'S RETIREMENT

Ian Mercer has asked us to convey this message to all our members.

'It was an honour to be invited to the Presidency of the Society in 1978 and to be able to serve it for twelve years from then on. Col. Theobald 'held the fort' as he put it while we were away working in Wales until 1996, but quietly manoeuvred me back into the seat on our return.

It has been a privilege to serve the Society for another sixteen years, but I am wholly supportive of the constitutional change that limits the presidential tenure. The Society goes from strength to strength and to have a professional historian at its head can only enhance that progress

I am very grateful both for the words said at the Dinner after my last AGM as President and for the liquid gift handed over with them. Pam was thrilled by her flowers and we both much enjoyed the dinner itself.

We do wish the Society every success as time goes by and history continues to be made.'

Ian Mercer

In honour and gratitude for their long service to the Society, Ian and Pam have been made honorary life members.

NOVEMBER MEETING

On 21st. November 2012 the History Society was treated to a presentation on **Dartmoor's Earliest Photographers 1850s-1870s**, although the photographs shown went into the 1890s. The extremely interesting talk was given by Dr Tom Greeves, Chairman of the Dartmoor Society, and author of works on the archaeology and history of the area.

We were shown about one hundred photographs by about a dozen photographers, but concentrating mainly on the work of William Spreat, Francis Bedford and William Merrifield. These men, although working commercially, produced work of a high artistic value. Dr Greeves lucidly brought out the aesthetic aspects of various pictures, explaining that many were bought and used as visiting cards. He also touched on the Victorian fashion for stereotype cards in which two images, viewed simultaneously, created a 3D effect. (Is nothing new in entertainment?)

Subject matter tended to be: landscapes, we saw Bedford's Haytor; the picturesque, Spreat's waterwheel; churches, including St. Andrew's, Moretonhampstead by various photographers. Other Moretonhampstead subjects were Fore Street, ending in the church, the Shambles in 1875, and, in the parish, Fingle Mill before it was destroyed in the 1890s (difficult to frame it later). Dr Greeves also showed a few Victorian jokes, such as a hapless angler attempting to fish in a dried up river bed: 'Fishing on the Teign'.

The speaker also demonstrated how visual records of the past could be helpful in reconstructing landscapes. For instance, the changes in the amount of vegetation, especially woodland, that can be seen now, and could be seen then. It is also interesting that some places, Manaton Green, for example, have hardly changed at all.

Dr Greeves was warmly thanked at the end of his fascinating illustrated talk, and we went home highly stimulated.

Brian Spittles

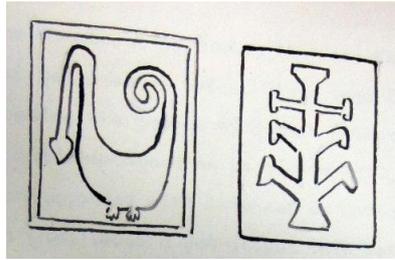


Moretonhampstead's Shambles - can you guess why they were removed!

JANUARY MEETING

Bill Hardiman's intriguing Chairman's talk was built around the quotation: **'Moretonhampstead is a town with a particularly intriguing religious history'**. He interpreted intriguing in two ways: interesting in a perplexing manner; and as a site of possible conspiracy, intrigue. The first half of the talk was based on research, issues and ideas in the new guide to St. Andrew's Church booklet written by Bill and Ian Mortimer. The four South West corner stones appear to be remnants of a frieze that originally externally decorated the old Norman church. They can be interpreted in the light of an old Norman font showing a Tree of Life. Images of a female pelican - often used as an emblem of self-sacrifice in Christian iconography - also link the illustrations to an old tradition. Bill also explained how a father pelican represented, through Hebrew texts, Abraham.

Two of St. Andrew's ancient stones drawn by Beatrix Cresswell early last century.



References to churches at Holcombe Burnett, Throwleigh and Spreyton provided interesting regional background. An Easter sepulchre was discussed in detail as being an example of a surviving pre-Reformation artefact. A George the Fourth coat of arms was discovered on a May 1830 Loyalty Board. As an attempt to gain the favour of a hated king it was mistimed, as he died a few weeks later.

Over the years there was much conflict over church government. Partly because Moreton was not accessible to wheeled traffic until the nineteenth century, for several centuries St Andrew's had absentee rectors. From a church point of view the people of Moreton, frustrated and dissatisfied at being treated - as they saw it - as a kind of milch-cow were considered rebellious and unruly. By taking over tithes young rectors could finance their way through university, though adding nothing to Moretonians livelihoods or interests. In 1316, for instance, a nine year old boy was appointed as rector. Later the tax-payers of Moreton challenged these circumstances, and by the 17th century the town had a reputation for radicalism. John Southmead and his son-in-law, Francis Whiddon, introduced Puritan beliefs and attitudes.

After the Restoration these melded into Nonconformity/Dissent, with parishioners becoming divided between sects. Although Dissent flourished to some extent sects became inward-looking, and less concerned with objecting to the Church of England. Disputes over the Sentry were not unknown before the Victorian period, but in 1867 a general, and fierce, outcry united residents when the rector, William Courtenay Clack, in an attempt to turn the area into a hay-field, fenced off the football and cricket pitches. He argued that the Sentry was part of the Glebe, the populace disagreed and his conspiracy to gain control of a potentially lucrative piece of ground failed. Disagreements flared up again in 1907 and 1923. In the Parish Council took over the area from its secular owner for a peppercorn rent.

The new book on St. Andrew's is exceedingly good value, as also was Bill's talk.

Brian Spittles

NEWS FROM THE ARCHIVES

A new dedicated website with a searchable catalogue of the Society's paper archives is at www.moretonarchives.org.uk.

We have had a number of recent additions and are particularly grateful to Edward and Sylvia Pike and to Ken Underhill for allowing us to scan some fascinating photos.



The Square fire 11/09/2007. Photo courtesy of E. & S. Pike

A generous grant of £400 from Teignbridge District Council, secured through the good offices of Councillor Mike Jeffery, has enabled us to continue funding the archiving work. We are now working to archive our growing collection of photos.

Moretonhampstead Parish Council has commissioned us to archive their records – some of which were only recently 'liberated' from a long-locked safe in the library.

Gary Cox and Judy Hardiman have transcribed the 1911 census records for Moreton parish and they will appear soon on the Society's website at www.moretonhampstead.org.uk

HISTOR-IAN'S CORNER

It's sometimes the little things that give the biggest satisfaction in historical research. When I was putting together the medieval section of the guide to the history of St Andrew's Church, there was a little point that really bothered me. On the one hand there is very little evidence for there being churches in eleventh-century Devon, outside Exeter. There is documentary evidence for just two dozen before 1100. There is no fabric evidence at all for the existence of an eleventh-century church in Devon, except in Exeter. But, on the other hand, there are a lot of Norman fonts in Devon. It really did not make sense to me – so many fonts and so few churches.

A realisation came upon me recently while reading a textbook: in early eleventh-century France, I read, many estates without churches had fonts in the houses of the lords of the manor. Ah! That would explain things in Devon too. Suddenly it seemed so obvious. Given that the construction of a church was normally the responsibility of the community, why would they bother going to all that effort and expense before a significant number of them were baptised? It is likely that in many places in Devon, before the construction of the parish church, there was a period when the community went to their secular 'lord's house' to be baptised in the community font. They listened to sermons outside, at a preaching cross, courtesy of a visiting priest. Only later, when their numbers and wealth had allowed them to build their own parish church and have a priest of their own, did they install their old font in their new place of worship.

I can stop worrying about that one now!

Ian Mortimer

TUESDAY 26TH FEBRUARY 7.30 pm STEAMING AROUND DARTMOOR

Virtual trip along the Moreton line with Peter Gray. Phoenix Hall St. John's Lane Bovey Tracey (by Jefferys) £3.50. For a lift in the Hardiman mobile Tel. 441 083