



## Newsletter

September 2011

### September Meeting:

This meeting will take place on **Wednesday 21st September**, as usual, in the Stable bar of the Union Inn starting at 7.30pm.

The subject will be:

#### **Parole Prisoners in Ashburton & Moretonhampstead**

There has always been a lot of anecdotal evidence about this fascinating topic. This illustrated talk by Barbie Thompson, draws upon our Society's archive materials, as well as newly available documents in the National Archives to explore who the prisoners were and what impact they had on the towns they stayed in.

### From the Treleven Diaries:

Thur. July 17th 1800 Fair Day. Not a great number of Cattle. The price rather on the decline. The weather was extremely warm, and the country Lads with their old red waistcoats white coats and leather Breeches, the smirk (??) cherry-cheeked lasses with their cotton stockings delicate white petticoats Lavender-scented linen &c. all sallied forth in the afternoon covered with sweat and dust their mouths all of a sooty colour blackness from their feeding heartily on the favourite Moreton Whort Pie. About 4 O'Clock we began to hear the sound of a Hand organ (perhaps the winding up of a Kitching Jack or the noise of young pigs would have been equally as harmonious to a musical ear as the sound of this old rubbish of a thing) which was accompanied with a Tambarine, pretty cleverly handled, this announced that Two dancing Bears, dancing Dogs, Monkeys &c were to be seen for 3d only. Immediately we were roused from another quarter with the screech of an old crazy Trumpet, blown by a very ill looking fellow who declared one of the grandest Exhibitions ever shown to the public was to be seen for 2d only at the Ring of Bells. Just by the Shambles an old worn out invalided seaman fixed his stand with his ½ peep, who declared he had the honour of showing it to the greatest part of the Nobility of this Kingdom. I believe these Exhibitions were thinly attended. In the Evening a Ball at the White Hart as usual. I cannot pass over this Day without mentioning another remarkable circumstance which greatly attracted the attention of the Public, (viz) Two Young Knights of the Thimble, from Plymouth-Dock. One in Regimentals with a large Hanger or Sword by his side, and from his not being of the common stature, this great weapon of war dragg'd in the ground as he strutted along his half Boots were rather of a preposterous kind with large bobs or tassels hanging to them something of the same kind that some old Gentlemen have got hanging to their canes, this altogether gave him a wonderful appearance - The other was dressed quite in a coxcomical stile with his Watch chain nearly down to his knee, without dwelling any longer on this subject I shall end it with their names 1st Field Marshal Nichols, 2nd Count Wither-combe !!

**Editors Note:** I think you will agree this account gives a fascinating insight into an aspect of life in Moreton over 200years ago. So many strange sights we would have seen there! I was interested in the reference to 'Moreton Whort Pie', and realised it was Whortleberry or Bilbury pie, hence the reference to 'blackness from their feeding heartily'. They are ripe at the time of this fair. I have found a recipe for it should anyone want it!

## Council Clippings :

From the year 1907: RECTOR AND COUNCIL AT LOGGERHEADS !!

An unfriendly state of affairs between the Rector and the Council existed in 1907 and the subject dominated the Parish Council minutes for that year. The March meeting was told the Reverend Sir Stanley Daws Dewey had placed barbed wire at the bottom of the Sentry causing nuisance and a danger to the public. The Council wrote a letter of protest but were taken aback by the Rector's reply. In this he accused the Council of showing "inconceivable ignorance". In May the annoyed Council sent another letter telling him "The Council regrets the needlessly aggressive tone of the Rector which does little to improve the relationship between yourself and the parishioners"! In addition, it was felt that as the Rector had copied his letter to the press, the Council would do likewise !! At the June meeting a sub-committee of the Council was formed to set up a plan of action after the Rector had again written and declined to remove the barbed wire. In July it was recommended that the Rural District Council should take action under the Barbed Wire Act 1893 to force the removal of the obstruction placed by the Reverend Dewey. Things rumbled on into October where the meeting heard that Reverend Dewey had been given six weeks to remove the wire. No further mention is made so we can only presume the Rector finally complied! At the same meeting the gas company quoted £100 to light the 33 street lights in Moreton each night for the next three years.

NEXT MONTH: DOCCOMBE POST OFFICE TO CLOSE EARLY ON THURSDAYS AND A LETTER TO THE ROYAL HOUSEHOLD !! **Gary Cox**

## Inns of Moreton:

### **The London Inn, or Courtney Arms.**

Cross Tree House, beside the Dancing Tree, was the site of the Moreton Inn with the shortest, but possibly the most eventful life. In 1799 John Hancock applied for a licence to open the house of his former master, the Rev. James Fynes, as an Inn, to be called the London Inn and Tavern. His application was refused that year, but succeeded in 1800. Two weeks later the bellringing for the anniversary of the King's Coronation was followed by a dinner at the London Inn for the bellringers. From then on, Hancock missed no opportunity to attract attention. He improved the access to the Dancing Tree (already used by Mr Fynes and his friends for musical entertainment), with a flight of steps leading into the tree from his skittle alley and a platform within it to hold musicians, several dancing couples and spectators ! It was popular with the Dutch and French officers on parole in Moreton. The following summer he was one of five innkeepers providing hospitality at the Races on Mardon Down, with a 60 ft. long booth and an impressive repast of cold beef, chicken, pies, tongues, wines and spirits! Balls and suppers were held at the London Inn whenever there was cause for celebration. They were patronised by the gentry and principal persons of the town. In 1806, after the Lord of the Manor, Lord Courtenay, had dined several times at the London Inn, he presented Hancock with a new sign of the Courtenay Arms, and the name of the Inn was changed. However, the days of the Courtenay Arms were short, for in the autumn of 1809 John Hancock left Moreton and disappeared 'from the embarrassment of his affairs'. His poor wife was left to face the music and sell up.

## October Meeting: AGM & Social Evening

Our October meeting will take place in the Stable Bar of the Union Inn, on Wednesday 20th October. 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 the

### **Annual Quiz on Moreton and Devon History**

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

**Chris Pilkington**