



moretonhampstead
history society

NEWSLETTER SPRING 2015

WEDNESDAY 20TH MAY

Mutiny on the Moor – the 1932 Dartmoor Prison Riot

Simon Dell, a retired local policeman, will use rarely seen photos and film to illustrate his talk. He will give us a fascinating insight into life and conditions at that time in our infamous local prison.

UNION INN 7.30 PM - NON-MEMBERS MOST WELCOME - £4 ON THE DOOR



WEDNESDAY 15TH JULY

Guided tour of Cothay

Manor & Gardens

Cothay is a well-preserved 15th century manor house surrounded by twelve acres of magically romantic gardens. It is situated on the borders of Devon and Somerset and has a connection with Moreton that will be revealed on the day! All day visit, including lunch. Details and booking form will be sent out a month before.



Recent archaeological discoveries on Dartmoor

Jane Marchand, Dartmoor National Park's senior archaeologist, gave us an inspiring talk for our November meeting based on the two main archaeological discoveries on Dartmoor in the last few years.

She began with the discovery by MHS member Mick Miller of flints, a stone row and perhaps burial mounds at Tottiford Reservoir. South West Water agreed to drain the reservoir for the Time Team to excavate the area for their 200th programme. Jane's story telling was fascinating with the various finds of Beaker pottery, a charred hazelnut, another hundred flints, several postholes including one to fix one of the largest and highest stones on Dartmoor, a hut circle with evidence of a previous wooden one and a stone row - all with problematic interpretations from the experts.

But the Devon mud almost defeated them! It is thought the area has always been wet and so was ideal for hunter gatherers which explains why there were so many flints present. The Time Team won a BAFTA Award for the programme and the National Park had an excavation they could not have otherwise afforded.

The tale of the discovery of the cyst on White Horse Hill was quite thrilling and you could tell how exciting Jane had found it. The discovery is an area which has little known archaeology and is on the fourth highest hill of Dartmoor. It had to be hidden under a wall for 2 years before Plymouth University could carbon date the lid of the cyst to be from 2000 years BC. English Heritage's managed to raise enough money to excavate it for one week. In the cyst they found fur and bones and thought they had found a dead fox until a tiny bead fell out! From there they wrapped up the bundle of fur and bones and wheelbarrowed it off the Moor to be taken to the Chippenham Conservation Lab before various different sections of the bundle were sent around the world for different types of analysis. The cyst has been rebuilt and can be visited on White Horse Hill as seen in the photo below.



Photo by Judy Hardiman

The animal fur was lying on a bed of meadow sweet and moorland grass and was eventually discovered to be the rear end of a brown bear held together by a copper alloy pin. The contents of the bear pelt after micro excavations proved to be the cremated remains, bones, teeth, material, wood, charcoal, and jewellery mingling with amazingly 7 layers of Icelandic volcanic ash from between 7000BC and 900AD. The bones indicated a gracile form and no weapons were found with them indicating they belonged to a woman of 18-25 years old from between 1900 to 1700BC. The wood was oak and hazel that appeared to have been coppiced with a bronze tool. There was a little bag made from cow or auroch leather with a base of intricately woven lime bark and another material made from woven nettle perhaps from her cape or sash. There were 220 beads for her composite necklace including amber from the Baltic, tin, Kimmeridge shale, which would have been stunning. Also there were wooden labrettes or solid circles made from spindle tree wood that would have been worn in her ears or nose and indicating that at this time they were able to turn wood. The analyzing and discoveries from this set of finds are still continuing changing the ideas of archaeology from this time.

Jane hopes that in the future these amazing finds with their stories will be able to be displayed locally, perhaps at the Postbridge Visitor Centre.

Brian Spittles

Eden Phillpotts and Dartmoor

On 21 January 2015 we heard an illustrated talk on '*Eden Phillpotts and Dartmoor*' by Phil Page of Dartmoor Nature Tours. Phillpotts (1862-1960) was a prolific author, with over 200 published pieces to his credit. His Dartmoor cycle of novels was written in the early twentieth century, capturing a slowly changing world.

Phil explained how he had come to read, and enjoy, the cycle - starting with '*The Forest on the Hill*', based on the real Yarner Wood where he worked. Many of Phillpotts' plots were conventional Edwardian fare, based around problems of courtship and marriage: the girl wants to marry the handsome, but not wealthy or sophisticated, shepherd but the girl's father has a socially and economically better suitor in mind. It was an age in which daughters were expected to obey fathers. So the inevitable happens, but with a modern twist. For the girl, now a wife, gives birth to the shepherd's child.

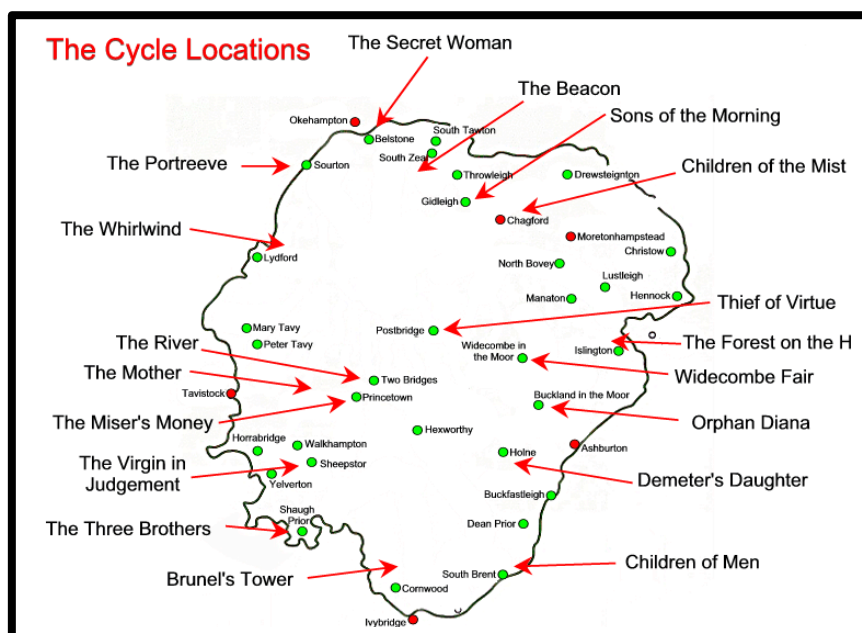
Phillpotts' was born in India, and was brought to Devon at the age of eight, where he lived initially in Torquay - in the same street as the infant Agatha Christie - before settling in the Broadclyst/Clyst St Mary area. He loved Dartmoor as a botanist, and also for the inspiration it gave him. Phillpotts claimed that he never took a story onto the moor but that the moor always gave him the story.

Phil Page outlined some of the historical aspects of the period: such as the change in the moral perspective after Victoria's death; the links between religion and social order; the suffragette movement, the build up to, and actuality of, the Great War. Although the Dartmoor cycle novels do not deal directly with these issues, they do - in the case of his strong women, acknowledge indirectly their importance.

One of the features of the Dartmoor cycle is indeed their presentation of strong women who refuse to be entirely beaten by society or fate. Other examples can be seen in novels such as *'The Thief of Virtue'* and *'The Secret Woman'*, whose very titles suggest nefarious activities. In the photographs Phil Page provided Phillpotts looked every inch an Edwardian gentleman: short, slicked down hair, holding a pipe, immaculately dressed in wing collars, and with cuff-links - he could have been any age from thirty to seventy. Yet this upstanding writer also had - perhaps - a darker side. After her marriage his daughter Adelaide possibly accused her father of incest. It has not been possible for any researcher to establish the facts beyond conjecture. And so the matter hangs without resolution.

In a very lively question and answer session after the talk, it was clear that the speaker had interested his audience immensely. It emerged that Phillpotts also wrote successful plays, and that *'The Farmer's Wife'* had been performed locally, to considerable interest. It had also been filmed in 1926-7, by Alfred Hitchcock before he went to Hollywood. Some readers thought they saw the influence of Thomas Hardy in the fiction, but Phillpotts claimed that his main literary style was R.D. Blackmore. The only public duty Phillpotts undertook was to unveil the plague celebrating Blackmore in Exeter Cathedral. A most enjoyable evening.

Brian Spittles

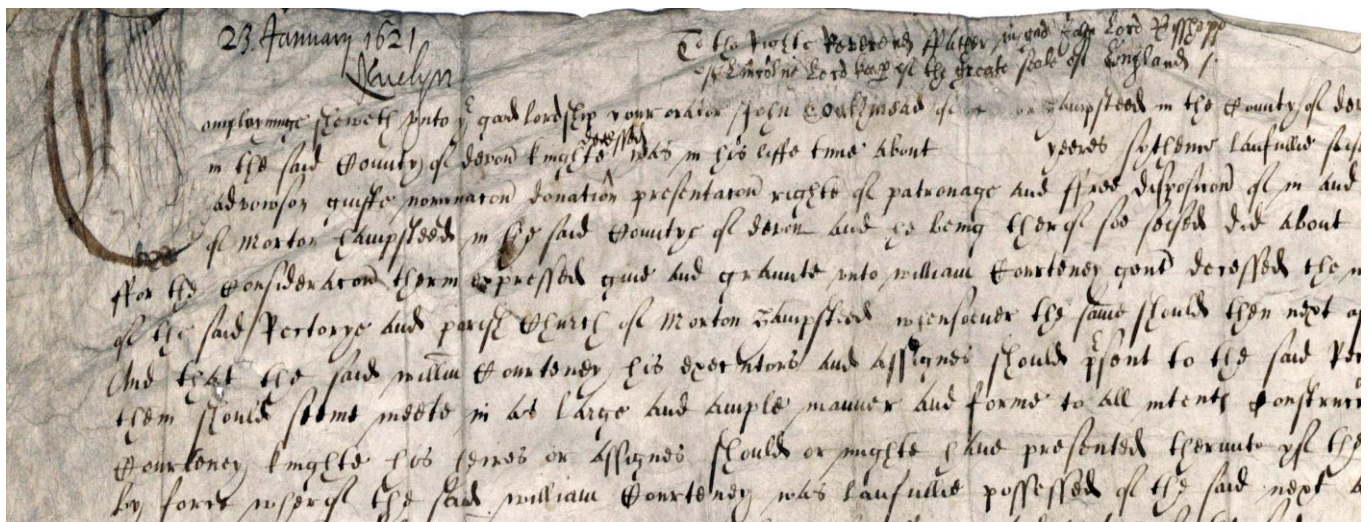


MEMBERS' INTERESTS

How did Moreton acquire a Puritan Rector?

My ninth great grandfather, William Southmead (1580-1640), was the younger brother of John Southmead of Wray Barton (1578-1651) who acquired the advowson and presentation right of patronage to the rectory and parsonage of the parish church of Moretonhampstead in 1621. "Uncle John" acquired the advowson from Sir William Courtenay (1543-1630) who the House of Lords determined in 1831 had been the de jure 3rd Earl of Devon.

The means by which Uncle John acquired the advowson are not clear. However, when Sir William Courtenay's father, Sir William Courtney the 2nd Earl of Devon, died in France in 1557, William the younger became the ward of his great-grandfather, Sir William Paulet, Marquess of Winchester. The Paulet families were staunch Catholics and this undoubtedly accounts for Courtenay's own later conversion to the faith and perhaps his lack of interest in the advowson for St. Andrews Church in Moreton. In addition, in later life Courtenay ran into some serious financial problems that resulted in the sale of a great deal of his inherited lands and estates and perhaps enticed him to sell the advowson to Uncle John. However it happened, it was not easy for Uncle John to take possession of the presentation right of patronage to the rectory and parsonage of the parish church. On January 23, 1621, he brought suit "*To the righte Reverend Father in God John Lord, Bisshopp of Lincolne*" against James Lowman, gentleman, who "*pretended title unto the premises made and contrived some secreat and fraudulent graunte and estate of the said next advoydance of the church to persons...unknown*".."



Extract from *Southmead v Lowman*
(National Archives document C 2/JasI/S37/73)

Uncle John asked that Lowman be forced to produce the deed for the property, not knowing the location or fate of "*the original deed nor where the same is conteyned whether in bag or boxe sealed or cheste locked whereby he may be able by the strict course of the commone law of this realme to sue or recover the same.*" Uncle John noted in closing that he would "*resteth altogether remettles touching the premises..in this course & course of patron to the lordship*".

I have not been able to locate a document evidencing the outcome of the suit, but Uncle John did indeed execute upon his right of presentation and patronage and on May 14, 1624, placed his son-in-law, Francis Whiddon, into the pulpit at St. Andrews, where he served until his death in 1656. On the wall over the south entrance of the church is the Whiddon Memorial, which notes, inter alia, that he "*married Anne daughter of John Southmead of Wrey Gent*". It is unclear to whom the advowson passed following Uncle John's death in 1651. However, by 1663 it was back in the hands of the then current Sir William Courtney.

Jeffrey Duke Southmayd

Editor's note: Southmead and Whiddon battled for thirty years to transform Moreton into a '*godly town upon a hill*'. Drunks were punished, revels discouraged, '*heathenish sports*' overthrown, '*fidlers and superfluous ale-houses*' banned and '*prophanesse*' curbed. I leave it to you to judge how much of their legacy remains!

Historic Churches' Trip

Plymtree, Payhembury & Ottery St Mary 30/09/2014

We were made exceptionally welcome at all three East Devon churches. 23 of us arrived through the thick fog to have an in depth introduction to Plymtree church by an old work colleague of Bill's' (a surprise for Bill!) from 45 years ago. Plymtree somehow escaped damage from the Cromwellian soldiers to their beautiful church. The 9 bay oak screen has hardly been renovated and has 34 brightly painted original paintings of saints and monarchs. Plymtree church also escaped much damage from the Victorian modernisers with a full set of carved medieval benchends remaining. However, Plymtree church has not escaped from modern vandalising – their beautiful 1600s alabaster plaque has recently been defaced having arms in the military sense and human form cut away. Plymtree are hoping to have it repaired and somehow have it protected from future vandalism. There are more lively wood carvings, probably 17th century of Flemish origin in the chancel and we were also allowed to handle some very old alter silver, the oldest being an

Elizabethan chalice, brought out especially for us. The medieval floor tiles were delightful too and the 1000 year old yew tree outside was magnificent.



Damaged alabaster plaque

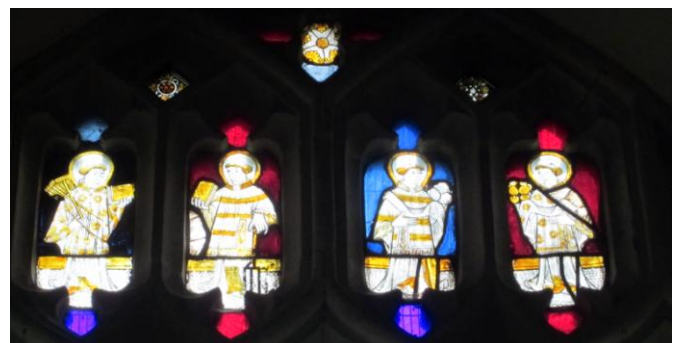
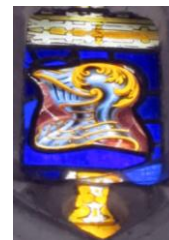


St Roch shows his recovery from the plague on the Rood Screen

At Payhembury they were amazed to see so many of us. It is in a lovely corner setting in a middle of the village with the pub, shop, farm & school almost within touching distance. This church feels warm, friendly, loved and very well cared for. We explored around by ourselves, after another hot drink, having much to see while Bill Field played the organ for us. The screen is richly carved and extends across the nave and dated from around 1450. Their own magnificent yew tree is split wide open in all directions and may be a 1000 years older than Plymtree's!



C15th Stained Glass at Payhembury



To The Tumbling Weir Hotel in Ottery St Mary for lunch. The actual tumbling weir is close by, ingeniously built to take away the water of the tail race from the large town mills through a circular waterfall sharply dropping down to the level of the river.

We were introduced to Ottery St Mary church by Simon Franklin who was Rector at Ottery before joining us at Moreton a few years ago. All Ottery people speak so fondly of Simon & Ann and obviously still miss them. Ottery is a church of completely different magnitude and grandeur than we have seen before. However, it has similarities with Crediton church as it is administered by 12 local inhabitants called Governors. Simon's friend Richard showed us around starting by showing us details on the outside, especially the very rare 12 Crosses of the Consecration (*middle photo*) with figures inside them, some of them having been restored.



Inside the church there is an enormous treasure trove for historians and building enthusiasts. The church was rebuilt by Bishop Grandison of Exeter in 1338 as a collegiate church with many medieval features still to admire. The beautiful Dorset aisle was built in the 1520 with an extensive ceiling of fan vaulting. The medieval bench ends have been attached to other pews and there is an extensive range of other wooden and stone medieval carving (*left photo*) throughout: roof bosses, misericords, screen, eagle lectern, and pre-Reformation Choir stalls. In the centre of the nave are the imposing tombs of Bishop Grandison's younger brother Sir Otho and his wife Beatrix. In the south transept a brightly coloured ancient clock dates back originally to 1437 based on the solar system. To top off the day was the exciting chance to climb up in the tower via the area over and across the transept and clock and ringing bells (*right photo*). What fun! Ottery St Mary's church would take many visits to get to know all its treasures.

Judy Hardiman

Tour of Torre Abbey and Torquay Museum 10/11/2014

What luck we had to have at least a sunny morning sandwiched in between days of rain when we visited Torre Abbey. It is a beautiful building in an isolated prime position right on the front at Torquay. Dee, the Abbey's education officer certainly provided us with a lot of information in a lively format (*see photo below*). She gave us a tour of the early Abbey buildings and remaining extensive ruins. The remaining 122 rooms on 20 different levels are set in a clever mixture of innovative modern design of glass and chrome within the original medieval building. It certainly works and has a definite wow factor. The building of the Abbey was started in 1196 by the Premonstratensian order, given by land by William Brewer and it became extremely wealthy. It was an austere order where speech was mostly forbidden. After the Dissolution of the monasteries it was eventually owned by the Carey family until the 1930s and they made the section of the Abbey facing the sea into a family home. It now contains an Art Gallery and Museum which has been stylishly curated and contains some wonderful paintings and artefacts. The Spanish Barn closer to the sea front is a huge medieval tithe barn used for the Abbey's south Devon lands and here Francis Drake kept 397 Spanish prisoners at the time of the Armada. Now it is a very popular wedding venue.



After lunch we started our tour of some of the collections behind the scenes at Torquay Museum on Babbacombe Road. This trip's initial purpose was to support Torquay Museum's fight to stay open and viable. It is so sad to see so much money

has been lavished on Torre Abbey but Torquay's Museum has had to face huge cuts so the building is in disrepair, jobs have been cut and the future looks grim for them. Our secondary purpose to visit Torquay Museum was to see Charles Laycock's collection of old Devon farming and farmhouse equipment. He gave his collection to Torquay Museum in 1942 for safe keeping and display and provided £10,000 for this. A lot of it is displayed on the top floor of the Museum in the purpose built Devon Farmhouse section and they have much more in storage. Laycock lived for many years in Moreton in Mearsdon on Cross Street and Moreton. Also in this area is a set of 3 gems that are thought to be the only remaining ones – packhorse crucks made to carry the heavy panniers full of commodities such as dung, peat, water, and household equipment across the country. Barry Chandler, the Museum's only curator, took us behind the locked door to a mini heaven of the remainder of the collections that have been gifted to them, including Laycock's. He has spent almost 20 years logging each item (thousands of insects are still waiting their turn) so his knowledge of everything in that room is phenomenal.

Laycock's Dartmoor farm kitchen collection once housed at Mearsdon, Cross St, Moretonhampstead



The collections are so varied from William Pengelly's documentary evidence of the exploration of Kent's cavern, his daughter Hester's collection of famous peoples' letters such as Bonaparte, Lincoln, Jane Austen, one of the best and largest Fijian collections, and photographs from Devon villages including some of Moreton to name only a few. What a remarkable place!

There are no major works of art their collections but they have in Hester Pengelly's Collection a long letter from Jane Austen to her sister which they hope to sell if they obtain permission which will then help with their financial deficit. Otherwise Torquay Museum really needs help to keep open so if you have any ideas or spare funds you know where to contact!

Judy Hardiman

Fingle woods – from Domesday to Dartington

For his chairman's talk in February, Bill Hardiman gave an illustrated talk based on his research for the Woodlands Trust. They have bought much of the parish's woodlands along the River Teign in a joint venture with the National Trust and plan to restore the coniferised areas (c80%) to natural broadleaf woodland with full public access. They have asked Bill to write a history of the woods so that they can respect its heritage during their restorative work and inform visitors about it.

The archives of the Courtenay, Hambleden and Dartington estates have provided rich sources of information alongside the personal stories of local people who worked in the woods within living memory. They reveal that the woods have played a very important part in the history of the parish and the lives of many Moretonians in a way that has not been previously appreciated. From Iron Age settlements at Cranbrook and Wooston to the great economic and social experiment of the Dartington Estate, the woods have provided a valuable source of materials for building, fencing, farm equipment and transport, charcoal, leather, fuel and animal pasturage as well as employment in the woods and saw mills. In the last two centuries they have attracted, pic-nickers, rally drivers, hunters (don't mention the pheasants!) and located one of the first electric turbines (for Castle Drogo).

The local manorial lords of Doccombe and Moretonhampstead recognised their importance and closely guarded their woodland assets and its sales' income. Woodwardens were appointed to stop any unauthorised extraction and there were regular fines in the manorial courts for '*trespass done in the lord's woods*'. But they were also ordered regularly to deliver trees to tenements that were '*in decay*' and in need of '*reparacion*' to their house or barn.

CUSTOMS OF THE MANOR OF DOCCOMBE

'We present that every tenant to have all his or their swyne, hoggs & piggs to goe in the Lords woodes of Doccombe & in the woods of Sir William Courtenay {Lord of Moreton manor} from the Feast of St Michaell Th'archangell {September 29th} & the day called All Soules {October 31st}.

Every Tenant to pay for a swyne iiii^d, to pay for a hogg ij^d & to pay for a pigg j^d.

Our Lord {Canterbury Cathedral} to have the thirde part & Sir William Courtenay the two parts of the mastage money.'

From 1928 to the 1980s the woods were owned by the Elmhirsts as part of the Dartington Estate. They became a 'Forestry Venture' as 80% of the area was coniferised to make it more commercially viable. Much of the work was carried out by local men and boys with Moretonian Jim Jackson supervising much of the felling and planting. The saw mills at Court St (now Sawyer's Close) was part of the

operation and provided much work under the supervision of Frank Brend. A revival of the charcoal industry during the war also gave the first work opportunities to young Moretonians such as the late Eric Snell and Ken Underhill. After the war the first commercial growth of Christmas trees was very successful

Unfortunately, the 'venture' ultimately failed in the face of increasing competition from larger and more mechanised forests around the world. But it has left a rich legacy and recent restorative work has cleared the area around the memorial plaque to Jim Jackson below Wooston castle.

*Memorial plaque to
Jim Jackson below
Wooston Castle*



FINGLE WOODS RESEARCH GROUP TALK

There is another memorial plaque on the Drewsteignton side of the river near Fingle Bridge. Its subject is Dr Siegfried Marian who revived the charcoal industry in the woods during the Second World War and employed a number of Moretonians. He has been the subject of some controversy.

"Dr Siegfried Marian: the enigma behind Fingle's memorial plaque. Mad, bad, or before his time?"

All will be revealed [well quite a bit] by Tim Harrod at 7 pm 14th May in the Fingle Bridge Inn [formerly The Fisherman's Rest], Drewsteignton

One of the Woodland and National Trusts' monthly talks about the Fingle Woods

Free entry, **but please let David Rickwood know if you'll be coming**

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