



**MAY MEETING**

**A BRIEF HISTORY OF T E LAWRENCE - also known as Lawrence of Arabia, John Hume Ross, T E Shaw, but who should have been called Thomas Edward Chapman!**

Alan Payne gave an informative and entertaining illustrated biography of this infamous but complex enigma known by various names. His entire life seemed to mark him out as 'different'. He was born illegitimate to Sir Thomas Chapman and Sarah Junner, a governess who was herself illegitimate; Chapman left his wife and family to live with Junner. Not the typical image of a late Victorian family. Lawrence graduated with First Class Honours in History and became a practising archaeologist in the Middle East but helped also with some covert military surveys. With his first-hand knowledge of the area, instead of being sent to the Western Front trenches in 1914, Lawrence was posted to Cairo on the Intelligence Staff of the GOC Middle East. Working with irregular Arab forces, he helped to develop forms of guerrilla warfare that the Turks struggled to suppress. As was his habit when travelling before the war, Lawrence adopted many local customs and traditions; his Arab clothing and prodigious camel rides fed his growing public image that was due in part to the sensationalised reporting of the revolt by an American journalist, Lowell Thomas, and later to Lawrence's autobiographical account, *Seven Pillars of Wisdom* (1922).



**LAWRENCE BY AUGUSTUS JOHN**

Caught up in the complex web of postwar diplomacy, Lawrence was distressed to find that Allied wartime promises to the Arabs conflicted with similar ones made to the Zionist leaders seeking a 'national home' for the Jews in Palestine. He reacted to his personality cult and disillusionment by seeking anonymity with changes of name and service in the ranks, firstly in the RAF and then in the British Army in India which he had to leave when rumours circulated that he was engaged in espionage activities. He rejoined the RAF and two months after leaving the service, aged only 46, Lawrence was fatally injured in an accident on his Brough Superior SS100 motorcycle in Dorset, close to his cottage, Clouds Hill (now National Trust), near Wareham.

Alan is a member of the T E Lawrence Society and his knowledge and enthusiasm for his subject were much appreciated. We are also grateful to him for standing in to replace a late cancellation by our booked speaker.

## SUMMER TRIPS

Our first summer outing on 20<sup>th</sup> June was to see the traditional farm buildings at Kilworthy Farm near **Tavistock**. The buildings, built in the 1850s by the 7<sup>th</sup> Duke of Bedford, were restored a few years ago through English Heritage. The Duke of Bedford was an enthusiastic agricultural improver and the modernising of Kilworthy was his most expensive project. We first admired the gigantic remains of the waterwheel pit for a water wheel of 30 ft in diameter. This is on the edge of the cowhouse and provided the energy for the agricultural machinery such as for threshing. The Cowhouse is the most amazing building made out of huge blocks of granite & the local greenish Hurdwick stone, consisting of 3 symmetric and parallel long cavern like sections all 3 floors high. The middle floor was for the animals, the top floor for their food and hay and the lowest crypt like floor for the dung that came down to accumulate beneath chutes from the middle floor to be then carted away back on to the farm. These facilities and well planned drainage and ventilation on such a large scale made the building almost industrial.

Meanwhile another summer deluge had set in, so we enjoyed the most perfect and comfortable Devon cream tea in our hostess's house before setting off to have a true drenching exploring Tavistock with our guide Alex Mettler from the Tavistock History Society. He showed us many interesting buildings and ruins including a medieval chapel, which is hardly ever, open to the public and explained the history of Tavistock. However, we were all relieved to get back in to the minibus and return home to dry ourselves out and warm up.

Gary Cox kindly gave Tavistock History Society a tour of Moreton in reciprocation for this trip in July.

Our second trip was in much better weather to explore **Whiddon House** on 18<sup>th</sup> of July. When this trip had been originally planned with David Danby Hill, a recent tenant of the house (National Trust), only the outside of the house was to be viewed but when David picked up the keys from the residents who still work in London they said we were welcome to see all the house as long as we were shoeless. So what a treat we had and its probable age and probable original shape and height were explained to us and the original route of the leat to the mill. Outside we also explored the medieval barn with its cruxes and strange small circles in the plasterwork. This was just as amazing as the main house. There are 3 floors of room after room all with interest of their own with amazing plasterwork, all with uneven floors but all very light. The main staircase may have been in a tower looking over the deer park, as that is how it is built going spirally round & round on well polished wooden beams.

After our tour of the house we had a further exploration but in to Whiddon Deer Park now in our boots with Tom the National Trust Warden for the Park. He is an extremely knowledgeable tree enthusiast and explained to us the scientific and ecological importance of the Deer Park. We also learnt about how these marvellous old trees are cared for such as the halo effect which is the importance of other trees not touching them as when they touch another tree that branch will start to die.

Our third trip was to **Crownhill Fort** on the edge of Plymouth on 22<sup>nd</sup> of August. We joined up with Chagford History Society for this trip so we were almost 40 in number. And the weather for a change was glorious.

This fort is now owned by The Landmark Trust and was in military use until 1986. It was built in 1870s to protect the harbours and docks of Plymouth from enemy forces not from the sea but from land. This is why an arc of similar forts, costing £3,000,000 in total, were built encircling Plymouth but only Crownhill Fort is now intact. All its 32 cannons and 6 mortars are facing north and east to prevent attack from land from enemy forces trying to reach Plymouth harbours and docks .The fort is extremely well concealed with its external buildings all having turf roofs and some of the canons concealed. Most of the fort is underground with 4 fighting levels going lower and lower connected by long tunnels and numerous flights of steps surrounded by a deep ditch hewn out of the bedrock. To finish off an amazing afternoon Ed, our guide gave us a demonstration of a canon firing. We were left to our own devices afterwards to walk around the ramparts and enjoy the amazing views of Plymouth, Dartmoor and Cornwall.



## FUTURE EVENTS

**Wednesday September 19<sup>th</sup>**. The Union Stables Bar 7.30 pm Simon Dell MBE will give us an illustrated talk titled **Murder Most Foul in Devon**. Simon is an ex policeman and is an accomplished and interesting speaker.

**Wednesday 17<sup>th</sup> October** **AGM** 7.30 pm at The Union Stables bar followed by Ian Mortimer's 'mystery event' with location dependent on the weather.

## CHURCH EXPLORATION TRIPS

Our first one this Autumn is on **SATURDAY 29<sup>TH</sup> SEPTEMBER** starting at Throwleigh church at 10.00 am where we will be shown around by a local resident. We will move on to nearby Gidleigh to be shown around again both the church and the castle grounds by the owner. On to Chagford for lunch (location of your choice) before exploring St Michael's church.

*Could you let me know if you can come and also if you would like a lift.*

**YOU MAY ALSO BE INTERESTED** in a talk at Throwleigh church on **Wednesday October 10<sup>th</sup>** at 7.00 pm about Herbert Read. His family of three generations were famous church woodcarvers from 1890s until recently and we saw his beautiful work in Dunchideock church. There is a small charge and if anyone would like a lift let us know. To book a place please contact Dawn Hatton on 01647 231 051 / [hatton.d@virgin.net](mailto:hatton.d@virgin.net)

## NEXT GREENHILL HERITAGE EXHIBITION –‘MORETON ON THE MOVE’

This will open for 3 weeks in early January 2013 and the subject is Moreton's transport heritage.

We are looking for volunteers for several different roles: planning the layout; finding and lending interesting objects, artefacts, photos and film; writing up information from different sources for display board; and putting up and removing the exhibits.



If you can help in any way please coming to a meeting at Green Hill on **MONDAY 24<sup>TH</sup> SEPTEMBER AT 7.30 PM** Let us know if you would like to help but cannot make the meeting. Contact 01647 441 083 / [billmgs2001@hotmail.com](mailto:billmgs2001@hotmail.com)

### Histor-Ian's corner

I've just returned from two days filming in France with the BBC, for the second episode of a three-part documentary presented by Dr Nina Ramirez on the 100 Years War. My main role was to be interviewed about the battle of Agincourt – on the battlefield at Azincourt. TV filming requires a lot of sitting or standing around – and I spent a lot of time thinking about the battle. It is a particularly thought provoking place because, unlike so many battlefields, that at Azincourt is still a huge open field of several hundred acres. There are no neat little hedges dividing it up and the field has recently been ploughed, just as it had before the battle on 25 October 1415. On that occasion it had rained heavily and the French war horses' hooves sank into the mud, allowing the English to seize the advantage. The odds were nothing like the English legend would have you believe – rather than 5,900 Englishmen defeating between 60,000 and 160,000 Frenchmen (depending on which English chronicle you read), about 1,500 English men-at-arms and 7,000 archers routed about 12,000 French men-at-arms and 5,500 archers and crossbowmen. Not bad for a disconsolate starving army. But what really struck me as I looked across that wide open field and imagined the blood of so many men seeping into the crevices of the soil was not how many lives had been lost but how many had been sustained by the agricultural function of the place. It struck me, with huge irony, that today we see the field as a slaughterground: perhaps five or six thousand men died there; the truth is that that huge field has given life over the last six centuries to just as many people. At moments like that you have to reflect that most of our history is as forgotten as the breezes of childhood.

Ian Mortimer

## VOLUNTEERS REQUIRED FOR GREEN HILL

We are looking for some help to man the reception desk. This involves a stint of 3 hours either 10 am-1 pm or 1-4 pm on any day except Monday. It is mainly a 'meet and greet' role which is always an interesting experience as you never know who is going to walk in the door! There are local people, exiled locals re-visiting the locality and their old school, art lovers and tourists from all over the world. It is a steady stream of visitors to keep you busy but not overwhelmed. All in all a pleasant way to help keep Moreton on the map.

PLEASE CONTACT:

01647 441 083 / [billmgs2001@hotmail.com](mailto:billmgs2001@hotmail.com)

IF YOU CAN HELP OR REQUIRE FURTHER INFORMATION