

Woodbury Local History Society

2010 Newsletter



A beautiful oak at Coniger Cross
From Sally Elliott's Survey of Parish Trees

We have a thriving Society with an increasing membership and an interesting programme for next year. There have been many discussions about creating a Heritage Centre within an extended Village Hall. Roger Stokes brings us up-to-date on the state of affairs, as we go to press in January.

Sally Elliott and Sylvia Wickenden, with additional help from John Treasaden, have surveyed the trees along the lanes of the parish producing a most important historical document. In this Newsletter, Sally provides a brief and most informative history of our hedgerow trees. Gill Selley writes about shoe making in the village and Nigel Tucker reveals more of his metal detecting finds. Mike Wilson, in a brief biographical article, describes an example of extreme survival 100 years ago during Scott's Second Polar Expedition.

A Brief History of Hedgerow Trees

With the completion of the hedge tree survey (see Woodbury Website www.woodburydevon.co.uk), which Sylvia Wickenden and I undertook over a four-year period, I thought it would be of interest to give a brief history of hedgerow trees and their close association with man over the centuries.

The earliest written records of hedgerow trees appear in the Anglo-Saxon Charters which were legal documents concerned with the conveyance of land. To some are attached a 'perambulation' which defines a piece of land by the description of its boundaries. There are some 840 such perambulations dating from 600 to 1080 AD. The Charters mention 787 trees, 639 of which are named. With few exceptions they were in hedgerows or free-standing and served as valuable navigation points. The most frequently mentioned are thorn, oak, ash, apple (the wild crab), willow, willow, elder and alder. Other interesting trees include the wild pear, the service, box and black poplar. There are also references to distinctive trees such as crooked, prostrate and 'footy' (large-based) oaks, ivied alders and 'hoar' trees (lichen-clad).

The position of the trees often relate to geographical features such as crossroads, junctions, streams, bridges and farm entrances as if deliberately selected for retention in the past as accompanying landmarks. In this way they become a familiar part of our inner landscape of 'home' and are a cultural link to our ancestors down the ages.

The appearance of hedges and hedgerow trees in the countryside is closely linked to social history and its influence upon land management. Evidence of this can be traced through the following summary of hedgerow tree history starting with the medieval period.

The revival of record-keeping in the medieval period offers a prolific source of study as Estate accounts and court rolls abound with references. Hedgerow trees, which centred in disputes, were planted, felled, stolen and overgrew the highway. During this period, hedgerow trees probably increased in numbers parallel with the increase in hedges which, by the 15th century existed in all parts of England. Oak was the most common species, and other non-woodland trees including ash, willow, elm and grey poplar. Hedgerow trees, especially ash, were favoured for use in many medieval buildings: with more space and light for growth than woodland trees, they produced the big timbers required for construction work.

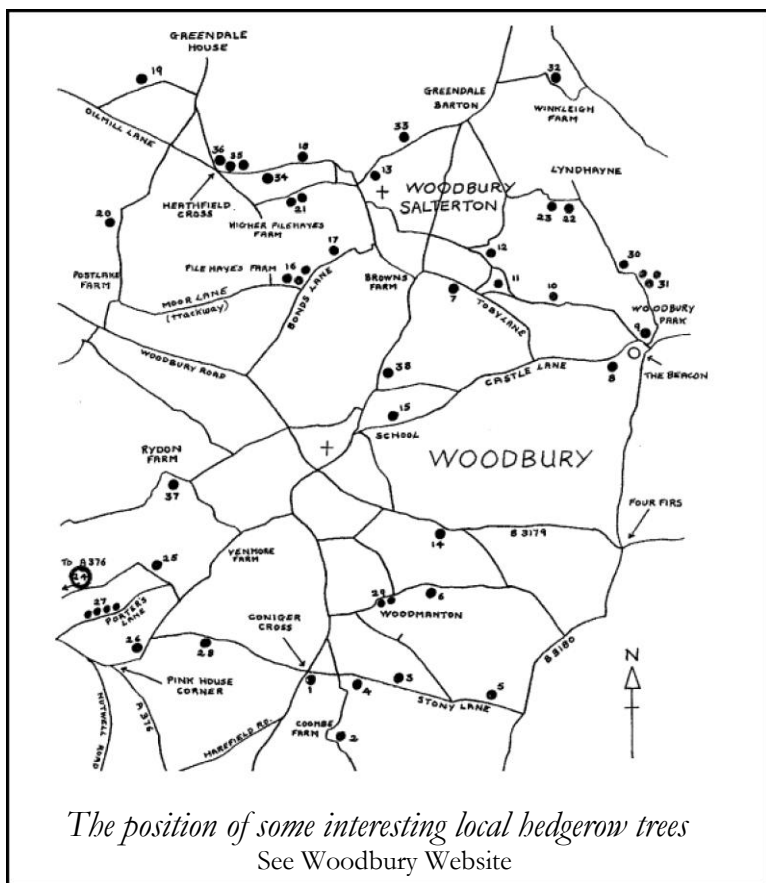
During the years between 1500 and 1750, the introduction of detailed surveys and maps and the work of landscape painters, added greatly to previous sources of information. They confirm the rise in the number of hedgerow trees to the point of comparative abundance. Maps of the 17th century show that almost all parishes across England had some length of hedge and by the 18th century there were more recorded than ever before or since. Oak, ash and elm were far the most common species. This marked increase was commensurate with a rapid population growth and with it a demand for building materials, fences, tools and fuel for homes and industry. In all these regards, hedgerow trees proved a valuable contributor.

The period from 1750-1870 was one of agricultural prosperity in which hedges and hedgerow trees declined. Agricultural subsidies, Enclosure Acts and field reorganisation meant the practice of grubbing out trees and hedges became prevalent as the medieval landscape was 'tidied-up'.

The years 1870-1951 cover an era of agricultural depression. The advent of farm machinery enabled the American Midwest to open up the prairies for arable use and therefore flood the market with cheap corn. Refrigeration aboard cargo ships enabled New Zealand, Australia and Argentina to do likewise with frozen meat and dairy products. The impact on British agriculture was severe. Land reverted to waste, buildings decayed and people left the land in vast numbers. There was little or no money or labour to manage hedges or fell trees and this neglect offered opportunities for saplings to grow up and species to re-colonize.

Since the Second World War the intensification of agriculture has removed thousands of miles of hedges along with millions of hedge trees. From the late 1960s onwards, 20 million elms have been lost to Dutch elm disease. Another destructive element is the mechanisation of hedge cutting. The machine is unselective in its work and consequently replacement saplings are cut down with the rest. The consequences of this practice are evident in Woodbury Parish. The hedgerow tree survey of 2006-10 revealed that the majority of trees were elderly or middle-aged with an overall scarcity of young stock.

Another reason for constructing both the hedgerow tree survey and the historical study was to raise awareness and appreciation of these wonderful landscape features and thereby make a case for their conservation and continuity.

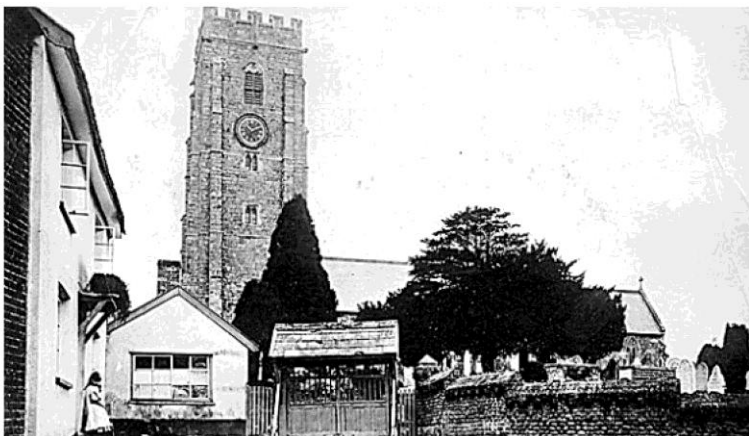


To emphasise this case, a reminder of their timeless ecological and aesthetic qualities:

‘The seasonal beauty of hedges and hedgerow trees have illumined everyday life through all the turbulent changes in history. It has been displayed to the Anglo-Saxon, the peasant, squire, lord and vagabond. The same spring blossom and autumn colour that enriched their time enriches ours today and must not be denied to the future.’

Sally Elliott

Cordwainers



Cottage by the Church c. 1890

One of the essential trades in any community was that of shoe making. The trade was divided into two types: cordwainers and boot makers. Traditionally cordwainers worked in new leather – the word comes originally from the soft leather produced in Cordoba in Spain. Boot makers used sheepskins in their trade and cobblers used old skins for mending them. A farming parish, such as Woodbury, had a plentiful supply of skins from fell mongers (who dealt with the skins of animals) and tanners, so the material for their trade was at hand. By following the occupations in the census from 1841 to 1901 one can see how the changes in agriculture and the expansion of the local towns affected the ability of shoemakers to make a good living in the parish.

Shoes and boots would have been made in Woodbury from its earliest days, but there is no record of a shoemaker before 1690, when a Henry Trapnell was charged with stealing a ring, and Arthur Trapnell stood bail for him – both were described as shoemakers. These two were brothers; their father, Arthur, would almost certainly have been a shoemaker too since the skills were passed on from one generation to another. To be a cordwainer it would have been necessary to go through a seven-year apprenticeship before one could practice the art of shoemaking. Another son of this Arthur Trapnell was recorded as standing bail in an assault charge in 1707. In 1739 John's son Edward, cordwainer, is named in

a document of lease. In 1773 Edward Trapnell took out a mortgage on his cottage in Woodbury and all its contents from John Trapnell. This cottage is what is now known as the Church Gate Cottage, which was then part of the Rolle Estate.

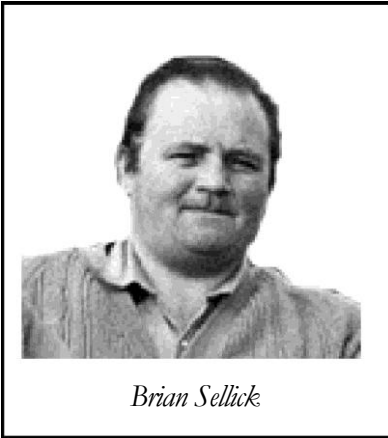
A 17th century cordwainer, John Axe was recorded as giving evidence in a tithe case of 1699, in which his age was given as 74. We can assume then that he had been a cordwainer in Woodbury since at least 1647. His son, John, also a cordwainer, was successful at his trade since he was able to buy Springhayes Cottage and lands (which included two cottages in Flower Lane and all the land down to Greenway). Another cordwainer, John Cooke, also gave evidence in the same case – he was ten years younger, but he would have been plying his trade since the late 1660s.

The Green Family were successful cordwainers living in their own property on the corner of Gilbrook Road and Globe Hill. The house was pulled down in the late 19th century. Several generations worked there, the last being Joseph who died in 1819, at the age of 80, and left his house and workshop with all its stock to his son Simon Kingston Green. Sadly the son did not continue in his father's steps and ended up in the debtors' prison in Exeter in 1821. He survived this, retained the house, and became a small farmer.

As can be seen the trade was often continued for several generations, and when one family disappeared another one set up business in the same premises. The lease of the Church Gate Cottage was sold in 1842, and the cottage was then occupied by one Thomas Lake, shoemaker. The occupant in 1859 was another shoemaker, Henry Knowles, and he was followed by Emmanuel Hawkins. The whole family might be involved with the business, though not necessarily apprenticed to the trade – to be a master cordwainer apprenticeship was necessary. In 1861 John Sellick from his shop in the White Hart tenement was assisted by his two sons, aged 21 and 14. Sometimes the Census records shoemakers' wives occupied with their husbands as boot binders, and it is probable that they did many other jobs in the business.

In the 19th century most of the shoemakers had their businesses in the central area of Woodbury Village, several in Church Street, the part which is now the centre of the Arch where once stood several tiny tenements: the two tenements attached to The White Hart; the tenement attached to the Maltsters; part of a house on the Green; part of Hoopers Cottages in Castle Lane; part of the present Victoria Cottages; and a cottage at the bottom of Globe Hill.

There were 15 shoemakers in Woodbury Village in 1851 and five in Woodbury Salterton at that time. After that date most of the trade was carried on in Woodbury with only two shoemakers surviving in Woodbury Salterton, both in the centre of the village. In 1861 there were 10 shoemakers in Woodbury Village and three women were named as boot binders. As there were no shoemakers working in Exton, Gulliford and Ebford those parishioners would have obtained their footwear from Woodbury itself, or perhaps from Lymptone or Topsham. As the century ended there were only five shoe



or boot makers left in the parish. The towns of Exmouth and Exeter could offer a much wider range, and probably more modern and cheaper items than the traditional village shoemakers. Probably these men turned to cobbling rather than the actual making of shoes, though boots would still have been an easy and cheap item to turn out. A few shoemakers and cobblers survived in the 20th century, one being Brian Sellick of Haydon's Cottage, who was working up until the 1980s as a cobbler.

Gill Selley

More Lead Artefacts from Woodbury



Lead, in one form or another is probably the most frequent item unearthed by the metal detectorist. Even the tiniest fragment of cast or sheet lead will produce an ear-splitting signal, and as I described in my last article, musket balls and bullets are the biggest culprits. As lead is so malleable, it was used for innumerable items in the past, and although the toxic nature of the metal was well known, this did not prevent it being used for many articles used by children such as toy soldiers, paint and even writing styli – the item above is a possible example, found near Bond's corner, and it appears to have well-defined tooth marks on its tip – so kids seem to have chewed their pencils centuries ago! Many older people can remember writing on slate boards with lead styli which were sturdier than this one, which is 90 mm (3½ inches) long.

Apart from musket balls and bullets, lead tokens turn up quite often, and the fields this side of Ebford have produced a number over the years. These are crudely formed, probably cast in clay moulds, and have been classified into 34 basic designs, two of which are featured here.



The left-hand token is single-sided, as most are, and is from Ebford. The other is two-sided and from Pathfields. Their use is a mystery but as most were produced in the late 17th and early 18th centuries and are prolific in rural areas, it has been suggested that they might have been used by the lower classes as crude currency. At this time there was a dearth of small change due to the fact that the copper content of a coin exceeded its value and so few were minted.

Another possible use was as tallies for work done, to be redeemed later for coinage of the realm or for goods, much like hop-picker's tokens.



This rather more sophisticated lead token was found at Ebford in 2005 and is a Dutch token used to facilitate passage through the locks between Haarlem and Amsterdam. The letters 'R.L.' stand for **Rijn**Land and one might wonder how this token came to be in a field in our parish. As usual Gill Selley was able to provide the historical background and tell me that Robert Venn, who was a wealthy serge maker and merchant owned fields in this area of Ebford, as well as having offices in Holland. Some of the nearby fields were named 'Great, Middle and Little Rotterdam' and as his

serge was shipped from nearby Topsham, the Dutch connection is readily apparent. Robert built Ebford Manor, and on his death in 1729 he bequeathed this land to his sister Elizabeth who married Matthew Lee.

Further evidence of foreign trade from Topsham can be found in a number of bag or bale seals from Russia which have turned up in Ebford. The example pictured is from St Petersburg, indicated by the initials 'SPB' with an 1820's date, and these seals were apparently attached to bales of hemp or flax. Presumably the hemp would have been used for rope making, possibly at Topsham, and the flax for weaving into linen. Flax waste was regarded as an excellent fertiliser, especially when mixed with night soil, which explains why these seals occur on farm land.





Lead cloth seals occasionally turn up in Woodbury fields, and the magnificent example on the left above, some 40mm (1½ inches) in diameter was found on the western edge of the parish near Bushayes. This seal of 1714 to 1724 would have been attached to a finished length of cloth after the alnager (a sworn officer) had checked it for quality and size, and that tax had been paid. Large seals such as this, depicting the royal coat of arms were in use from the reign of Elizabeth to George I and were formed of two discs, joined at the top and bent over to be squeezed onto the cloth edge. Both discs showed a cast design, but only the front disc was found in this case.

Finally, some lead artefacts are found which remain unidentified, and the cloth seal on the right above is an example. It was found near Parsonage, and depicts a chained bear, surrounded by what appears to be a Germanic inscription – another example of foreign imports to the parish.

Nigel Tucker

A Little Known Local Hero



Priestley, Murray Levick, Browning

The road between Woodbury and Budleigh Salterton passes by a group of houses known as ‘The Ting Tongs’. This was where Surgeon Commander Murray Levick chose to retire. He is little remembered locally. As you read this in our cold winter, spare a thought for Murray Levick and his five companions who were stranded inside a snow cave for the whole of a pitch-black Antarctic winter. He was one of the two doctors on Scott’s last, ill-fated expedition to the South Pole. Later he went on to found the British Schools Exploring Society.

He was born in Newcastle-upon-Tyne in 1877, the son of a Civil Engineer and was educated at St Paul’s School. He studied medicine at St Bartholomew’s Hospital, qualifying in 1902 and immediately joined the Royal Navy as a Surgeon Lieutenant.

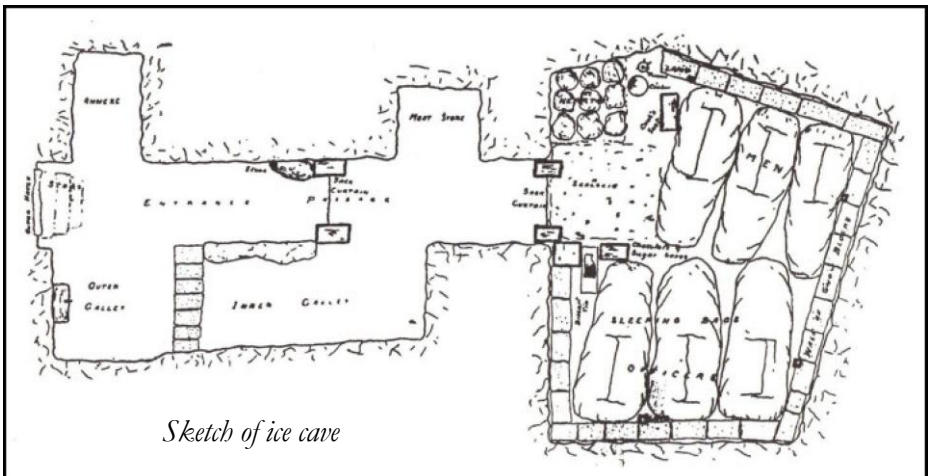
In 1910 he was chosen by Scott as a doctor and zoologist on Scott’s second (*Terra Nova*) expedition. The *Terra Nova* sailed from Cardiff in June 1910 and after calling at Australia and New Zealand reached the Antarctic at the end of that year. They spent the first year setting up base camp and then exploring to the east, where to their amazement, they bumped into Amundsen. In January 1912 Murray Levick was assigned to a party of six led by Lt Campbell RN to undertake a brief exploration to the North. They were put ashore with their sledges, food and gear expecting to be picked up six weeks later. It was a grand but forbidding place

facing a towering range of mountains where glaciers overflowed as sheer, perpendicular cliffs from the high plateau inland.

When they returned to the rendezvous on the allotted date there was no sign of the *Terra Nova*. They feared some catastrophe had befallen her (in fact the approach of the ship had been blocked by a heavy ice pack). The region was swept by frequent hurricanes and blizzards, and as the sun progressively declined, the days were rapidly shortening. Eventually they were faced with the appalling prospect of complete mid-winter darkness and temperatures of -30° F. Their tents were light and now threadbare, and they had only three weeks of rations left. After four weeks of waiting they were forced to accept there was little chance of rescue until the following spring. They had no choice but to make camp.

Hurricane force winds smashed down the tent that Murray Levick and two companions were using. After a great struggle they managed to rescue their precious belongings and make a two-mile dash across ice in the gale for the snow cave that the other three were building. Inside it was cramped and too low to stand erect. It was bitterly cold and pitch dark except for short periods when they lit a blubber candle.

They killed seals and penguins for food which quickly froze. Later, at -25° F., with frost bitten hands, pieces had to be laboriously and painfully hacked off using a chisel and the geologist's hammer. These pieces were boiled up in a tin upon an improvised smoky, blubber stove to make 'hoosh'. Their few biscuits, chocolate, cocoa, tea and tobacco were strictly rationed (one biscuit a day was nibbled as a luxury). When not hunting or being the cooks they huddled in their frozen sleeping bags sleeping and dreaming of sumptuous meals. The cramped



latrine was just inside the outer door and using it provided formidable difficulties especially when suffering from diarrhoea.

Murray Levick did his best to enforce some rules of hygiene during the preparation of food but it must have been an impossible task. He tried to maintain some fitness for the long sledge journey ahead by teaching the Swedish Exercises. A chapter of a book was read aloud each night and a church service was held each Sunday.

They lived in these unimaginably terrible conditions until they saw the first glow of sun on August 7th. Then it was another five weeks before it was wise to start the trek back to the expedition's base camp. Much of the time blizzards were blowing and they were unable to see more than a few feet ahead. They pulled the two sledges in a state of extreme exhaustion over the Drygalski Glacier for 230 miles to the Base Camp with one too ill to assist. On arrival at the Base camp they were welcomed with great astonishment and joy but this was soon tempered by the news that Captain Scott's Polar Party had perished. Over the next year they continued with the scientific work and sailed home in January of the next year.

Back in the Royal Navy, Murray Levick served in the Great War in the North Sea, Suez and Gallipoli. He retired from the Navy in 1917 and married the granddaughter of Mrs Beeton. His subsequent medical career centred on his life-long dedication to improving fitness. He held a number of Consultant positions connected with physical education and physiotherapy.

In 1932 he founded the British Schools Exploring Society '... to encourage young people to go to remote wilderness areas, to teach them to fend for themselves, to foster in them the spirit of adventure, to test their endurance and help them acquire physical fitness; and to give them a taste for, and elementary training in, exploration and field research'.

During World War II he was recalled to the Royal Navy as Surgeon Commander to advise on the training of the Commandos - especially on survival and living off the land. Only recently has it become known, that he gave advice to the volunteers of the extraordinary and highly secret mission – 'The Stay Behind Cave' in the Rock of Gibraltar.

An exhibition devoted to Murray Levick will open at Fairlynch Museum, Budleigh Salterton at Easter 2011. There is much more to the story!

M.E. Wilson

The Proposed Heritage Centre

I thought members might like to be brought up to date on the trials and tribulations of our proposed Heritage Centre.

Our team of three, plus three from the Village Hall committee, have been meeting regularly since April to put together a joint plan to further the cause of both the Hall and the History Society. Eventually, after a lot of hard work by many of those involved, a good and workable plan and an outline design was agreed which met the needs of both sides. Furthermore, the plan and design has been approved in principle by East Devon planners, whom we met at Sidmouth, and we were given an indication that should a planning application be lodged it would be looked at favourably. The plan and design had also been looked at by County officers, who also gave their backing, subject to a financial plan.

The History Society has already had a grant application lodged with County Hall for over a year, which we were advised was progressing slowly (due to County problems of re-opening the account). This was obviously beyond our control, but had the ultimate potential of realising £500k plus (hopefully!), against the plans and details that had been lodged as a joint venture.

As the Hall Trustees wanted to press on with their side of the project as a matter of urgency, it was agreed to move forward by splitting the project into two phases. The first phase will improve the facilities of the Hall, while the second phase will add the Heritage Centre. Both phases are dependent on funds becoming available. Importantly, we agreed that the design for the Hall improvements should allow the Heritage Centre to be added later without having to make major changes to the Hall. Work has progressed to specify the requirements for the changes to the Hall and the requirements for the Heritage Centre; the Hall Trustees have commissioned an architect to draft some plans, leaving space for the addition of the Heritage Centre as part of a coordinated plan. A consequence of splitting the project into phases is that the original design will need to be changed considerably (and support for the revisions gained from EDDC), but on the other hand the Heritage Centre might itself be built in stages (one floor at a time) to better match our budget.

We are hoping that by the time you read this, things may have changed for the better with regards to funding. An update will be given at the AGM. Word is now circulating that the grant account at County Hall may be opening again in April, and we are still in a good position for our application for funds to be successful.

During the course of our discussions with all parties, EDDC, County and other funding bodies, it has been made very clear to us that success in a grant application will depend on a good financial plan. The society is not presently a trading business (unlike the Village Hall) having a very small annual turnover which will certainly not support the running cost of the Heritage Centre. We estimate that the Heritage Centre will cost in the region of £6,000 per year to run, which is ten times our present income. In addition we shall need capital for the purchase of items such as display cabinets and interpretation boards which will change from time to time. This of course presents quite a difficulty in our path, but a problem we have to get around if we are going to be successful in our mission.

One way to provide the necessary income is by setting up a 'Trust Fund', the interest from which could be used to pay the annual running costs and allow some ongoing capital expenditure. We would need a fund of about £300,000 to provide adequate income into the future.

As a first step in this direction I would put these suggestions to society members. We need to know if you still support this project or not. For the project to take off, your support will be needed as volunteers to staff the Heritage Centre (we would like to open several days per week at least in the summer), to plan and set up displays, to prepare educational material, and to raise funds. In addition it would be good to be able to get some pledges of financial support either in annual contributions from individuals or businesses, or from potential legacies or gifts, to accrue a substantial trust fund. £300,000 in today's financial climate is not such a drastic sum, but impossible for a small society to raise itself. However, if our history is to be preserved someone must pay for it. Food for thought!

If anyone would like to talk about this to me, with suggestions or offers, (in confidence), I would be very pleased to hear from you, and can be contacted on: 01395 232 350 or at Sunnybank, The Arch.

Please remember that one day we will become history ourselves, but we cannot take our money with us, or so I keep being told!

Please read this leaflet carefully, and come to the AGM to give us your verdict on what you think we should do, and how we might attain the financial requirement and staffing asked for above. If there are any public relations or funding experts within our membership who would like to take on this side of things, we would like to hear from you – please!

In the meantime we proceed with caution to progress the cause.

Roger Stokes

2011 Programme

Feb. 3rd Annual General Meeting and Social Party

Mar. 3rd Trevor Adams *À la Ronde – Researching the past*

May 5th Carolyn Keep *East Devon Historic Gardens*

June **Annual Visit** *Exeter Cathedral tour*

Sept. 1st Gill Selley *Crime and Punishment*
The criminal system and Woodbury (1600-1900)

Nov. 3rd Roger Stokes *The Great Woodbury Jigsaw Puzzle*
of 1839



The Discovery of the Infant Moses
A 17 Century embroidery from *À la Ronde*
Courtesy of T.A. Adams