

# Newton St Cyres History Group June Meeting



Our summer outing on Saturday 14<sup>th</sup> June was well chosen to coincide with the centenary of the outbreak of the First World War on August 4<sup>th</sup>, which has been very much in the media. We visited the War Horse Country Park at Parsonage Farm, Iddesleigh, where Graham and Rose Ward are close neighbours of Michael Morpurgo, who wrote War Horse, based on their farm. The Ward family have farmed there for over a century

and before that, the house was at one time home to the Reverend John 'Jack' Russell, who bred the well-known terriers of that name. The Wards have arranged an interesting exhibition of memorabilia of the war, and also local people and places at the time, the history of the farm, the books written by Michael Morpurgo and information about 'Farms for City Children'. This is the wonderful charity which the Morpurgos have run since 1976 and which uses Parsonage Farm for many of its teaching and learning experiences.

Altogether there was a great deal of interest to see, and we were lucky to have a warm and sunny day to walk around the farm. Some of the group went up to the Duke of York in Iddesleigh for lunch before meeting the rest of the party at Parsonage Farm. We were all welcomed by Graham Ward and shown to the 400 year old cob barn which houses the exhibition and a video introduction from Michael Morpurgo. We were then free to browse through the various exhibits, before some of us set off on the farm trail. The views over towards Iddesleigh are very beautiful and we all enjoyed the peaceful countryside, but advise other visitors to be more mindful of their route than we were! Having got lost and found again, we proceeded back to the farm to look at the farming history displays in the old piggery, the old farm machinery and some of the sheep and other animals kept on the farm. Everything is well labelled and there is even 'Joey' the war horse in the field, to remind visitors about the story of the fictional horse of 1914, that has been so successful on stage and screen.

Finally we were served a most delicious cream tea by Rose Ward (who originally comes from Newton St Cyres). The conservatory and garden are very pleasant places to sit and admire the views and the tea and cakes and scones were excellent.

Thanks to Jean and Roger for all the arrangements. Thanks also to Nick Baker who led a walk through Upton Pyne for the Ramblers and the History Group on May 25<sup>th</sup>. It was in aid of the Upton Pyne church and was most interesting and informative about the history of the church, the village and its buildings.

The Revels on Sunday 6<sup>th</sup> July was an enjoyable event and we hope that many of you will have enjoyed seeing the History Group displays. They included photographs of the railway station from past and present, weather events, and also the impact of the First World War on village life. Two individuals from the village who lost their lives in the war, Walter Mears and Edward Quicke, were remembered.