

## **PRESS RELEASE: Celebrating Exmoor Through the Power of Poetry**

The Exmoor Society, celebrating its 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary, has just announced the winners of its poetry competition, re-established after a lull of a number of years.

They are:

1<sup>st</sup> Pat Glover's 'Old Ruddock's Boy Made Good, They Say'

2<sup>nd</sup> Audrey Coldrick's 'Through Somerset Fields'

3<sup>rd</sup> Ian Enters' 'Leprosy Window, Culbone Church'

Highly Commended:

Matt Bryden's 'An Imposition'

Paul Ings' 'The Sense'

Graeme Ryan's 'May 17<sup>th</sup>'

The purpose of the competition is to inspire people about Exmoor, one of England's finest landscapes, in a special way though the power of poetry. The Society commented that it was amazed at the number of entries coming from as far afield as the Czech Republic and many areas of England as well as those living in the national park. Rachel Thomas, The Exmoor Society Chairman, said, 'The Society is particularly grateful to the two judges, Richard Westcott and Cathy Nicholls, poets themselves, who read each poem anonymously and, although selecting the final three winners, commented on how difficult it was to make comparisons, worse than comparing apples and pears, as each poem was special in its own unique way. As a result, the Society will put the three winning poems, and the three highly commended ones, on its website. They will also appear in the *Exmoor Review*, The Exmoor Society's annual publication, with a view to possibly publishing an anthology of all the poems.'

On the variety of themes, the judges commented thus:

'There was a profound sense of history, ranging from the nineteenth century Ada and her husband's famous tunnels, through medieval churches, to ancient Exmoor where stones stand in silent sentry.

'Meanwhile many Exmoor birds flew by.

...wood warbler and redstart/Pied flycatcher and dipper/Flitting like librarians.

And larks drizzling their song, as well as buzzards, pheasants, pipits who chatter their verses, a kite, a curlew (or two), fieldfares, song thrush and cuckoo.

'Amongst other fauna we frequently met the Exmoor pony free roaming and of independent mind, with cream-rimmed eye, along with red deer, cattle, sheep and lambs; even an adder appeared.

'Flora was represented by pokey random heather, beech hedges fired to a warm coppery glow, snowdrops (which giggle, in lazy loveliness, lifting lacy bonnets), and shimmering blackthorn.

'We were exposed to Exmoor in every season, bright and dark, welcoming and hostile, dry and sodden. In short, Exmoor was well and truly celebrated – its clouds and big skies, rivers and hills, pathways and lanes – with enthusiasm, joy and gratitude, which could not but move us.

'From the technical point of view poetic forms ranged from the formality of the sonnet to completely free verse; we heard regular rhymes as well as some subtle and original rhymes; there was ingenious and creative use of space and enjambment, some lovely musicality, and even a concrete poem.

'Our rules did not specify a type face, so we were treated to some handwritten texts, bringing their own individuality and distinctiveness, along with a huge variety of fonts. But we did specify a maximum length, which sadly meant a couple of good poems excluded themselves.

'Some poems worked particularly well, in that they were uniquely Exmoor focussed, consistently demonstrated originality (in subject, approach or expression), spoke clearly with freshness and concision, and skilfully used the many opportunities the medium of poetry offers. Our winners certainly achieved this, but there were special moments in many of the poems.

'We hope that the Exmoor Society's Poetry Competition has demonstrated the power of poetry, raised its profile and saluted Exmoor in a special way. Thank you then to all our poets – thanks for your thoughts and feelings so carefully presented through poetry, for offering your poems, for entering the competition and supporting the work the Exmoor Society does.'

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Attachments: And Ruddock's boy made good, etc – Winning poem

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Note to Editors:

The Exmoor Society exists to promote and organise action for the conservation and enjoyment of the landscape, wildlife and cultural heritage of Exmoor national park. It was established in 1958 and successfully fought proposals to afforest The Chains, the central moorland area of Exmoor. It has continued to campaign against adverse changes and encourage people's understanding of the park's special qualities. It acts as an independent watchdog and champion for Exmoor's status as a national park.