

Brian Chugg: ASPECTS of EXMOOR

An exhibition of his paintings and drawings will be held at the Museum of North Devon from 11 September 2006 for six weeks.

A Private View will take place on Saturday 9 September 6.30 to 8.30 pm

At this event awards will be presented to the two prizewinners (age 13 to 15 years and 16 to 18 years) of The Exmoor Society's Brian Chugg Art Award.

All profits will be donated to The Exmoor Society

Front page photo:

The Exmoor Society

Registered Charity No 245761

2005-2006

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FROM THE CHAIRMAN

One of the major ways that the Society can influence the future direction that Exmoor should take is to be thoroughly engaged in the process of producing the new National Park Management Plan. Sensibly, the National Park Authority has decided to involve key stake holders from the beginning by seeking views on a strategic vision that says what the Park should be like in 20 to 30 years time and is specific about the special qualities it represents.

The Society has asked for the Management Plan at the outset to outline the purposes for the national park designation in order that it is clear about how it is different from plans that are the responsibilities of others, such as local authorities and development agencies. It will also set the context of the importance of Exmoor as part of a national and international family of protected landscapes.

The Plan will be ready for general consultation by the public by April and so in order to give members the opportunity to make further suggestions I include the details of our submission in this Newsletter.

I really would welcome your comments and views as the Society does represent the wider community of interest in Exmoor and the Executive will be responding to the more formal consultation later in the year.

The Society offers an even fuller range of events this year for members and the public. The Spring Lecture should be an important debate on how the new Government Agency, Natural England will relate to Exmoor. Assuming the bill to consolidate the three agencies – English Nature, The Countryside Agency and Rural Development Service - gets Royal Assent Natural England will come into being on 1 October 2006. The chairman of English Nature, Sir Martin Doughty has been appointed as Chair of Natural England and the new Shadow Board and Executive should be completed by this April.

Natural England will bring together the Countryside Agency's roles in relation to landscape, recreation and access with the Rural Development Service's roles in relation to agri-environmental schemes with those of English Nature. How all these roles will be integrated rather than remaining as separate functions and what the priorities and culture of the new organisation will be are crucial questions to be answered. Therefore the Speaker at the Society Spring Lecture, Pam Warhurst, who is deputy chairman of the Countryside Agency is significant in that she should be able offer us some interesting insights into Natural England's work on Exmoor. Anyone connected with conservation and is a landowner or farmer, or with recreation, access and tourism interests should find the debate invaluable.

In contrast the AGM theme will focus on the Exmoor Experience, hopefully bringing out the very special qualities to be enjoyed both by visitors and local people. The Summer walk and picnic is centred on Cloggs Farm in order to gain a further understanding of farming issues. The calendar enclosed show the wide range of activities undertaken by the society and its groups. All these activities emphasise how privileged indeed we are to be helping to conserve, enjoy and understand this marvellous place.

Rachel Thomas

The following sections are the Society's submission to the National Park Management Plan

VISION

1 Landscape

- ❖ Protection and enhancement of landscape types that provide wide open spaces and view points and help to give experience of tranquillity and solitude, grandeur and wildness that can lead to spiritual renewal and inspiration.
- ❖ Greater awareness of the importance of upland farming communities in retaining landscape character.
- ❖ Greater areas of moorland to redress fragmentation.
- ❖ Greater areas of native woodland, particularly in the Brendons.
- ❖ Greater understanding of significance of the landscape types.

- ❖ New boundary of the National Park based on landscape character assessment.
- ❖ Removal of clutter that detracts from the essential qualities.

2 Wildlife

- ❖ Secure habitats for rich biodiversity and distinctive species adapted to live here
- ❖ Good condition of all SSSIs but with refined criteria for judging their condition.
- ❖ Greater understanding of significance of wildlife and better communication to those involved in land management
- ❖ A high quality environment relating to water, soil and air.
- ❖ Low carbon footprint
- ❖ Greater understanding of livestock management skills needed to retain special habitats and species.

3 Cultural Heritage

- ❖ Protection and greater understanding of rich record of human history and habitation.
- ❖ Awareness of the role of Exmoor in the conservation movement.
- ❖ Continuation of local traditions, particularly in relation to land management, customs and legends and the arts generally that are based on the landscape.

4 Recreation and Understanding

- ❖ Opportunities for open air exercise, particularly walking and riding, which can be both challenging and inspirational and related to Exmoor special qualities.
- ❖ Greater use of imaginative modern techniques to interpret the conservation value of Exmoor

5 Livelihoods

- ❖ Continuation and adaptation of livelihoods dependent upon wise use of natural resources.
- ❖ Retention of rural skills particularly in relation to livestock management.
- ❖ Diversification activities that fit in with the conservation values and public enjoyment of the special qualities.
- ❖ Good quality of life for local communities within the boundaries of national park purposes.

In fifty year's time these special values should be of such significance and so well protected that world heritage status as a cultural landscape is achieved for Exmoor.

SPECIAL QUALITIES

- 1 Extensive areas of landscape types rare in Southern Britain that include heather and grass moors, spectacular sea cliffs that are the highest in England, steep sided wooded valleys with fast flowing streams and rolling hills dominated by traditional upland livestock farming.
- 2 A comparative pocket sized national park, intimate in scale with remarkable landscape contrasts over short distances but with an apparent balance between the wilder and cultivated areas.
- 3 Large areas of wide open moorland receding into the far distance but broken by deep combs is particularly dominant this leads to exposure to the elements and a perceived feeling of remoteness,
- 4 A spectacular coastline with hogsback cliffs plunging dramatically to the sea from a height of over 1,000 feet.
- 5 Landscape character developed over a long period of time that shows the harmonious relationship between people, place and nature and that is relatively free from modern developments and intrusions
- 6 A unique mosaic of habitats supporting a great diversity of wildlife including large herds of wild red deer, rich lichen communities and rare fritillary butterflies and moorland and woodland birds.
- 7 An ancient historic landscape with burial mounds, standing stones and ancient settlements on high moorland and picturesque villages and farms tucked into valleys.
- 8 An ancient farmed landscape shaped by farmers from the Bronze Age onwards through to a few great estates and long connected farming families still present today. A landscape grazed by Exmoor ponies, red Devon cattle, Devon Closewools and Exmoor Horn indigenous to the area

- 9 A settlement pattern with small scattered farmsteads a few clustered villages and with only three larger rural centres.
- 10 Very low density of population which is emphasised by a somewhat artificial Park boundary that cuts out the main towns that surround the Park and which provide housing, employment and services for the local area.
- 11 Early connections with the conservation movement and natural beauty starting with the romantic movement and continued by legends and novels such as Lorna Doone into the 20th century with the concerns over moorland loss and then the state of the moorlands crucial to Exmoor's designation as a National Park.
- 12 Wide open spaces that are particularly suitable for challenging open air activity such as walking and riding but also for nature study and spiritual refreshment and inspiration.
- 13 Wild open spaces with open access and complemented by an extensive Rights of Way network easily reached by road for walking and riding.
- 14 A living community with local traditions and customs linked to the land and sea resources.
- 15 A landscape shaped by human enterprise and exploited over generations.
- 16 A landscape of outstanding universal value worthy of being designated a World Heritage Site in the category of cultural landscape.

ISSUES Related to the Vision and Special qualities

- 1 Exmoor's Conservation Values
 - ❖ There needs to be a greater knowledge of conservation values related to landscape, wildlife and cultural heritage in order to understand their special significance and be able to evaluate their condition and enhance them.
 - ❖ There are problems in protecting Exmoor's landscape because of its comparative small size, the fragmentation of its moorland blocks and

the mosaic of landscape types all of which need subtle management if they are to remain intact and protected from insidious development.

- ❖ Criteria need to be established in order to be able to judge the environmental capacity of the different landscape types.
- ❖ Landscape character assessment is an important tool which needs to be used in relation to planning decisions, agri-environmental schemes and general management of amenities.
- ❖ A properly resourced landscape section must be established even though resources are tight.

2 Future of moorland management and upland farming

- ❖ Difficulty in influencing changes to farming through CAP reform and central Government responses and implementation programmes.
- ❖ Problems in retaining a viable farming community and rural skills necessary for conservation maintenance and at the same time providing a reasonable standard of living.
- ❖ Emphasis on diversification that leads to lack of time to undertake conservation tasks.
- ❖ Sensible adaptations to climate change.
- ❖ Comprehensive maintenance of the best moorland areas likely to be difficult because of changes in farming structures and enterprises.
- ❖ Complete survey of the historic features particularly in relation to moorland.
- ❖ Importance of awareness of environmental capacity and fragility of the landscape, balance between land use types.

3 Recreational use and understanding of Exmoor National Park

- ❖ Increased demands from different recreational uses some of which conflict with each other.
- ❖ A particular problem of off roading by motorised vehicles, legal and illegal.
- ❖ Difficulties of promoting visitor experience related to the Park's special qualities. New indicators need to be developed that assess visitor experience.
- ❖ Unintended consequences of providing amenities particularly in the wilder areas.
- ❖ Problems of people understanding the statutory purposes of National Parks and the need to reinterpret these to a modern sophisticated urban society.

Planning

Several applications have been commented on by the Society

➤ **Telecommunications Mast Beacon Down Quarry Parracombe**

An appeal by Airwave 02 Ltd was made in the autumn against the serving of an enforcement notice by ENPA to secure the removal of the mast in a quarry near Parracombe. The company had originally been given permission for a mast 21 metres high but had erected a 31 metre mast instead and had applied for retrospective permission which was refused. The Society objected on landscape grounds and supported the ENPA's stance by sending a letter to the Planning Inspectorate at Government Office South West. A public inquiry is to be held on 9 and 10 May.

➤ **Cutcombe Market, Wheddon Cross**

This application was for a major development at Cutcombe that included housing and business premises as well as changes to the market itself. The Society objected on the grounds that the application needed further detailed work on several issues relating to the landscape impact, the housing proposals and the need to apply a sequential test as a major development. Of particular concern, was the proposal for housing which is a departure from the recently adopted Local Plan that states that any new housing must be for affordable housing only with local occupancy ties. The Society made clear that it had no objections to the proposals for the livestock market.

➤ **New Farmstead at Countisbury Exmoor**

This planning application for a new bungalow and extension of a farmyard at Wilsham farm was deferred. Planning Officers had recommended refusal on the grounds that the need for a farm worker's dwelling on the holding had not been proved. The Planning Committee did not accept this recommendation but agreed to look further at the landscape implications. The Society had objected on landscape grounds because of its prominent position on high land near to the A39. Officers are now working with the applicant to try and find a more suitable site for a new farmstead.

➤ **Wind Turbines at Rose Ash, Batsworthy**

A proposed planning application for a wind farm at Rose Ash, Batsworthy has caused considerable alarm to the Executive. The development would be just outside the Park and is likely to have a significant landscape impact. The Society will discuss the proposals with the Dartmoor Preservation Association when their new Chief Executive visits Parish Rooms in February, just after the date when this Newsletter goes to print.

Landscape Working Group

The Landscape Working Group set up and lead by the Society in March 2005 has now met several times and has made considerable progress in some of the 6 key tasks that it identified. Particularly important has been its work on the Moorland Landscape where a methodology has now been established to allow a judgement to be made on its condition. As a result of the evaluation a surprising number of issues have emerged and these include the following:

- ❖ scrubbing up of moorland
- ❖ people pressure
- ❖ dumbing down 'country park' character
- ❖ loss of tranquillity - clutter
- ❖ increasing suburbanisation - development
 - infrastructure
 - visual intrusions
 - masts, power lines
- ❖ increasing emphasis on recreational use and decline in farming activities
- ❖ changes in land use
 - through diversification
 - horsi culture
 - extensive game shooting
- ❖ over management
 - fences, tracks, squares, fire management, access and interpretation

What has become very obvious to the working group is the need for a landscape strategy programme to be incorporated in the National Park Management Plan and the Society is putting pressure on the Authority to include a properly resourced landscape section in its own work. As mentioned in last year's Annual Report landscape appears to be the forgotten element in the three conservation pillars to be protected for the nation. Exmoor has the opportunity to adopt the new approach to protecting landscape beauty being pioneered here.

* * * * *

S H BURTON

The Society is particularly sad to announce that S H Burton died just before Christmas. In his obituary in The Guardian his son John highlighted his remarkable literary achievements and his outstanding written work in so many different fields.

Tim had the rare skill of being able to combine his ability as a writer with his other roles as a teacher, walker, conservationist and campaigner, and as a result he produced a remarkable series of books and articles about Exmoor, written over 40 years and achieving in Victor Bonham-Carter's words '*The well deserved reputation as the foremost interpreter of Exmoor.*'

There are two aspects that shine through all his written material and make his legacy particularly important. First, his deep love and knowledge about this special place and second his passion to protect it for future generations. Both his championing and watchdog role of Exmoor as a national park are to be celebrated.

From his arrival as English master at Blundell's School he became fascinated by the association with R D Blackmore and the Doone legend and desired to explore further the nature of the land associated with wild outlaws. In his first book on Exmoor in 1952 he gives a vivid description of his first walk with a friend who introduced him to Dunkery

and Hanny Combe which started his Exmoor adventure and love affair. This description still remains fresh and moving today.

The second aspect, as a watchdog, was Tim's work with the Society in campaigning for its protection. Associated with the Society almost from its foundation he became Chairman in 1966 for six years. This was during the period of great turmoil when the pamphlet '*Can Exmoor Survive*' was published and which revealed evidence of moorland loss. It was used to wage a campaign both nationally and locally against ploughing and fencing of moorland for the next decade. Tim continued to serve on the Executive until 1976 when he became a vice president of the Society until now. An article in the 1976 Exmoor Review illustrates clearly how Tim used his writing skills to draw attention to Exmoor's plight, called '*Nobody's Fault*' and where he catalogues the weakness of national parks at that time.

Tim would have exposed today's threats and pressures brilliantly and at the same time would have brought out clearly Exmoor's special qualities. Perhaps there are no finer words about Exmoor than in the introduction to his 1986 book where he describes its endless variety in such a small space and suggests that this is the secret of its fascination.

We salute his legacy both to the Society and to Exmoor generally.

Rachel Thomas

Lawrie Wills 1932-2005

I first met Lawrie in the '70s when I was moved to a bank branch where he was a customer, and over the time I was there we chatted about this and that whenever he called, and usually had a laugh about something or other.

Contact was lost for a while when I was moved again and, during that time, unbeknown to me, Lawrie suffered a heart attack. True to form he made a good recovery and got back to walking, which he had always enjoyed, by getting involved with Devon County Council's Parish Paths Partnership and by joining some walking groups.

We met up again at a footpath conference at Seale Hayne College, and when he heard that I was a voluntary guide with Exmoor National Park he asked if he could join me on my walks. He did, and that was the start of our friendship and his introduction to the Exmoor, which he came to love so much. Eventually I introduced him to the Exmoor Society, which captured his great enthusiasm, and he was subsequently invited to join the Executive Committee, later becoming secretary to the society's groups.

There was never a dull moment in Lawrie's company, with his infectious laugh, endless tales, stories and sometimes risqué jokes which at times brought the car to a halt on our journeys as I could not see to drive for laughing!

His skill in recruiting members for the Society was amazing, and no-one could escape his powers of persuasion. On one occasion he 'chatted up' a lady who was herself recruiting for the National Trust, the outcome of the encounter was Exmoor Society 1, National Trust 0.

Alas, he is gone and I miss him, especially on walks, where he was my constant companion, as do his many friends from the Society and his numerous other activities.

D.M.

Tourism on Exmoor

From the tourism industry's point of view, 2005 was a reasonably good year but, as usual, different sectors of the industry experienced different seasons. While serviced accommodation as a whole did moderately well, small B and Bs seem to have suffered a mediocre season. Self-catering businesses, on the other hand, had another good year. It is difficult to assess trends in visitors (a new monitoring process is being developed), but it seems likely that numbers are still declining slightly or staying about the same.

However, the trends which have been emerging for some time now seem to be firmly established - visitors are booking late, looking for short breaks, expecting a high quality experience and looking for bargains, while the changes to the school year mean that it is more difficult to attract visitors during May/June and early July. The coming season will also pose challenges, not least the impact of the World Cup in June which will tend to keep people at home, glued to the TV. The tourism industry is becoming increasingly important for the economy of Exmoor and it must rise to these challenges if it is to prosper.

Visit Exmoor, a public/private sector partnership, will have an important role in promoting sustainable tourism in the greater Exmoor area through a busy programme including marketing, training for business and improving the quality of the tourism 'offer', providing more reasons for people to come to enjoy the delights of Exmoor's special landscape.

Martin Evans
Head of Recreation and Tourism
Exmoor National Park Authority

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How can we support those that look after our landscape? asks Sean Beer

In a previous article in the Exmoor Review (46:33-37) I tried to outline some of the challenges that face our farmers in hill and upland areas such as Exmoor. These challenges continue, and the underlying argument is a simple one; our landscapes look the way they do largely because of human interaction through farming. If we want to enhance our landscapes and our biodiversity we have to work with the farming community who, along with their livestock, are themselves part of this landscape.

As a result of global social, economic and environmental considerations the European Union is under considerable pressure to reform the way it supports its farmers. You may argue that in the past this support has not been very helpful, but without it Exmoor farmers would have a great deal of difficulty in continuing to farm. In the 2004-2005 Annual Report I outlined how the Single Farm Payment (SFP) has been introduced. If we want to conserve the social, economic and environmental landscape of Exmoor the SFP, when it arrives, will not be enough.

The government recognises this and has introduced a range of other 'agri-environment' schemes to provide additional support for farmers that provide additional environmental benefits. These schemes include Entry Level Stewardship and Higher Level Stewardship. For many farmers on Exmoor joining these schemes will be central to their future survival; having said that there are real concerns, from organisations as diverse as the National Farmers Union and the National Trust, with regards to the way that these schemes operate -or don't- for upland farmers. Also just breaking is news that in the interests of a reduction in the size of the EU budget, the EU Rural Development Budget –from which stewardship payments are taken may now be 15-18% smaller. (*The Daily Telegraph 30.1.06 p.11.*)

Of course one of the real answers to the problem would be to reward farmers with honest prices for the food that they produce. Farm gate prices have in real terms never been as cheap as they are today, and if we don't sort out the injustices of the food supply chain we are in danger of getting the landscape, environment and society that we deserve; and it won't be a pretty sight.

Sean Beer is Senior Lecturer in Agriculture at Bournemouth University. The views expressed here are his own.

The Year Ahead – *Look out for*

- **A new programme of walks**
- **Spring Lecture – ‘Nature or Nurture on Exmoor’
How Natural England will relate to Exmoor**
- **Summer Picnic at Cloggs Farm**
- **South West Lakes weekend**
- **Annual General Meeting**
- **Christmas Lunch**
- **Members Spring Weekend 2007**
- **Exciting new education project**
- **St Luke’s Church, Exmoor**

There is a busy year ahead and we hope that as many of you as possible can attend some if not all of the events. The Groups continue to offer a variety of activities and functions for their local members but welcome anyone who wishes to attend.

Membership Matters

Thank you to all of you who have increased your subscription in line with the new rates. However we have had a few problems.

- ❖ Some members paying by banker’s order have done nothing and we are being paid the old subscription rate. Could you please amend your banker’s order to the new subscription rate.
- ❖ The bank on receipt of the new banker’s order should automatically cancel the old banker’s order. However, a small number of members have discovered that they have paid twice, we apologise for this and as far as we are aware we have made the appropriate refunds.
- ❖ Some of you who were family members decided to take out single membership. For an extra £5.00 only you can gain the benefits of family membership and help our overall numbers as well.

Thank you to many of you for sending donations with your subscriptions. It is pleasing that members recognise the costs involved, not only in supporting the membership but in taking forward a full events programme and fulfilling our crucial role of acting as a watchdog for Exmoor.

Should have any queries about the status of your subscription please contact the office on a Tuesday or Thursday (01398 323335).

ALFRED VOWLES PHOTOGRAPHIC COMPETITION

This competition attracted a good number of entries which were judged at Parish Rooms in January. An exhibition of the winning photographs, and other entries was held during February at the Somerset Guild of Craftsmen's Gallery in Dunster.

Winners and commended in the three categories were:-

***Landscape:* Winner, Rob Partridge. Commended, Emma Rowe and Mike Sherwin**

***People at Work:* Winner, Patrick Hyde. Commended Jennifer Rowlandson**

***Heritage:* Winner, Mike Sherwin. Commended, Ronald Rayner and Mike Sherwin**

**The overall winner of the Alfred Vowles Memorial Trophy was
Mike Sherwin**

The Society would like to thank the Somerset Guild of Craftsmen for its support again this year and recommends members to visit the Gallery where there is a fine display of contemporary crafts from Somerset and Exmoor.

Alfred Vowles' son Roland donated the trophy which will be held by the winning competitor for two years. We are very grateful to Roland for his continued interest and support. The photographs will be on display at the Society Annual General Meeting in September.

Samuel Foss Conservation Award.

This award was won in 2005 by CARE Devon for its woodland project including board walk at Blackerton. The woodland project continues to grow and further development has taken place since last year. Please do visit this centre at Blackerton you will be assured of a warm welcome by the residents and staff and they would value your support.

Nominations are invited for the 2006 Samuel Foss Conservation Award. The term 'conservation' includes landscape, wildlife, historic environment, cultural heritage and understanding of the National Park's special qualities and any one furthering these interests can be recommended for the award. Recipients of this award are not restricted to members of the Exmoor Society. Nominations, which may be made by individuals or organisations, should be backed by proposers and should reach the Exmoor Society, Parish Rooms, Dulverton TA22 9DP not later than 31 May 2006.

Diary Dates for 2006

Spring Lecture, 25 April 2006. 2.15 at Dulverton Town Hall

The guest speaker is Pam Warhurst, vice-chairman of The Countryside Agency. She will be talking about the new agency Natural England and its implication for Exmoor. (See booking form)

Joint Event with Exmoor Natural History Society Saturday 8 July

Meet at Headon Cross (A39) for this 8 mile walk across Grabbist to Dunster.

South West Lakes Weekend. May 13 and 14

South West Lakes will be holding two days of activities at Wimbleball Lake over this weekend. There will be lots to do and see.

Summer Picnic at Cloggs Farm, Hawkridge Sunday 13 August. 2.30pm

Join David Bawden, a fifth generation Exmoor Farmer on his commercial beef and sheep farm in a marvellous landscape. Take a walk with David, talk about his work, learn about the Exmoor Horn and the efforts to promote this breed and experience the countryside and

amazing archaeology of the area. Bring a picnic tea and don't forget to wear suitable footwear and clothing.

Christmas Lunch, The White Horse Inn, Exford. Saturday 2 December. 12.30 for 1.00pm (cost £15.50)

As this event is popular please book early when you get the booking form with the Annual Report. In using this hotel the Society is helping to support the local economy on Exmoor. You may like to make a weekend of it, so contact the hotel – Tel:01643 831229 and ask for their rates. Please quote the Exmoor Society Christmas Lunch when making your enquiry. Please note that the room for the occasion is on the first floor. The hotel does not have a lift.

AGM Weekend

Society Annual General Meeting 23 September 2006

Venue: Dulverton Middle and Community School

Theme: *Experience Exmoor*

Speaker to be announced

**Sunday 24 September. Service at St Luke's Church (Exmoor)
Simonsbath. 9.30am**

**Followed by the AGM Walk commencing at 11.00am from
Mounsey Hill Gate GR893319**

Members Weekend 2007. 13 – 15 April. White Horse Inn, Exford

Cost £162.00 per person for the weekend. Please see enclosed flyer.

Summer Agricultural Shows

Dunster Country Fair – 26 July

Exford Show – 9 August

Dunster Show – 19 August

Moor Walkers Needed

You will see we have a great walks programme for this year; we are only able to offer the walks programme thanks to our volunteer walk leaders. We are always looking for more walk leaders. As a volunteer walk leader you can offer as many (or few) walks as you like. So if you would like to share your favourite walk with others then why don't you contact the office to find out more.

Walks Programme.

Walks usually begin at 11.00. but some begin earlier so please check the time. Do wear suitable footwear and clothing, take wet weather gear and please follow any advice given by the leaders – who are all members of the Exmoor Society. Please take a picnic lunch unless other wise indicated. Walks are free to members but £2.00 donation is requested from non-members. If you have any queries about the walks please phone 01398 323335.

Saturday 8 April. 11.00 Porlock and Hawkcombe Head. Meet at Porlock Weir car park (GR865471). Through the woods to Porlock, Hawkcombe and Pittcombe Head returning via Pitt Farm to Porlock Weir. 8 Miles.

Wednesday 26 April. 11.00 Around Wheddon Cross This 6 mile walk begins at the Rest & Be thankful Inn car park, Wheddon Cross (GR924378) and proceeds to Luckwell Bridge, Dunkery Gate and to Drapers Way on the return. Usually there is a wonderful display of primroses.

Monday 1 May. 11.00 Hillsford and the Two Moors Way to Lynmouth Meet at Hillsford Bridge National Trust car park (GR742476) for this 6 mile walk along the Two Moors Way to Lynmouth for a picnic lunch, returning along riverside paths via Watersmeet.

Saturday 13 May. 10.30 Woods, Valleys and Moor This 10 mile walk will be at a lively pace, meeting at Gallox Bridge (GR991432) and proceeding to Bats Castle, Long Combe and Withycombe Hill.

Tuesday 23 May. 11.00 Doone Valley Walk Meet at Malmsmead car park (GR792478) This walk proceeds up Malmsmead Hill to the medieval village, returning via the Doone Valley. Approx 8 miles

Saturday 3 June. 11.00 A Walk Through Time Meet at Brendon Two Gates (GR765433) for a moorland walk looking at land management through the centuries.

Saturday 10 June. 11.00 A Writers View – Woody Bay to the Heddon Valley Meet at National Trust Woody Bay Car Park (GR675486) and join Harriet Bridle along the lower coast path to Hunters Inn for either picnic or pub lunch. Return via upper coast path. A fairly strenuous and hilly walk of 5 miles.

Saturday 8 July. 11.00.00 Seaching for the Heath Fritillary Joint event with ENHS. Meet Headon Cross Minehead/Porlock Rd (GR935459) and walk across Grabbist to Dunster. Viewing Heath Fritillary Butterflies and Red Deer. 8 Miles.

Sunday 16 July. 10.30 Dry Bridge and Farley Water This strenuous walk begins at Dry Bridge (GR759455) and visits Badgworthy Lees, Hoccombe, Water, Exe Head, Hoar Oak, Cheriton Ridge and Farley Water. 12 Miles.

Saturday 5 August. 11.00 Around the Barrows Meet at Aldermans Barrow (GR837424) and proceed to Larkbarrow, Tom's Hill returning via Kittock.

Tuesday 22 August. 11.00 Heather and Western Gorse Meet East End of North Hill (concrete area) (GR954475) and take the rugged coast path to Hurlstone Point to view heather and western gorse. 9 Miles

Monday 28 August. 11.00 The Acland Story Meet at Bossington Car Park (GR897479) for a 6½mile walk on the Holnicote Estate, visiting Selworthy, Lady Acland's Hut, the all weather hut and Selworthy Beacon. Returning on SW Coast Path and Bossington Hill contour path.

Saturday 9 September. 10.30 Oare and Badgworthy Water Meet at County Gate Car Park (GR793486) for a 10 mile walk visiting Oare, South Common and Badgworthy.

Sunday 24 September. 11.00 One Gate to Another Meet at Mounsey Hill Gate (GR893319) walking to Winsford village by Summerway and Yellowcombe returning via the Exe Valley and across Winsford Hill.

Monday 9 October. 11.00 Larcombe Foot there and Back Starting at Exford car park (GR854384) walk via North Higher Combe to Larcombe Foot proceeding to Nethercote Drive and beside the Exe to Lyncombe. 7½ miles

Saturday 14 October. 10.00 Lynton and Lynmouth Panorama Meet on Lynmouth seafront, opposite the cliff railway for a challenging twelve mile walk proceeding along the East Lyn Valley to Watersmeet, Myrtleberry Cleave returning via the Two Moors Way to Lynton. 6 hour walk.

Exmoor Scenic Walks

All of us who walk on Exmoor enjoy discovering new walks. This series of booklets by Shirley and Mike Hesman offer just this. Each booklet contains five easy to follow walks based on different parts of Exmoor. Shirley and Mike have been walking on Exmoor for 32 years and this is reflected in the detail of information offered on all the walks, along with some notes on the history of the area, the wildlife you might see and important for some if there is a tea-room or pub enroute.

These booklets are now available from the Exmoor Society at a cost of just £1 each, plus a stamped addressed envelope (A5 size).

- Brendon Hills
- Combe Martin
- Dulverton
- Dunster
- Exford
- Horner
- Hunter's Inn
- Lynmouth
- Lynton
- Porlock
- Simonsbath
- Webber's Post
- Wheddon Cross
- Winsford
- Withypool

St Lukes' Church, Simonsbath

The Society is glad to report that it has now entered into a special relationship with St Luke's Church, Simonsbath, the Parish Church of Exmoor. More details of this development which will enable the Society and its members to become directly involved with moorland life will appear in the Annual Report.

For the moment however the Executive would like to bring to the notice of members the appeal which St Luke's is presently making for £250,000 to pay for a complete re-roofing and modernisation of the church. Remarkably for such a small parish just over £200,000 of this sum has already been promised or received, and your Executive encourages all Society members to take this opportunity to make their own direct contribution to the saving of an iconic piece of the physical Exmoor which we all know and love.

Donations may be sent to R Ashburner, Friends of St Luke's Newland House, Exford. TA24 7NF. Cheques made payable to Friends of St Luke's

Tim Davey

The Exmoor Pony Society's 2005 Activities

2005 was an exciting year for the Exmoor Pony Society as it saw the completion of its new film "Discovering Exmoor Ponies". Professional filmmaker Alan Tibbitts of Video-Ex Productions (who made The Year of the Working Sheepdog) worked with a team from the Society. Filming took place all over Exmoor to capture the story of the free-living ponies in all seasons, with wonderful footage captured of the ponies in winter blizzards and torrential rain as well as the softness of the summer breeding season. The cameras were also taken all over the UK filming the activities Exmoors are involved in with people. The purpose of the film is to raise awareness of the Exmoor breed, thereby to stimulate more interest in owning an Exmoor pony and ensure greater security for the moorland herds.

A further promotional initiative is going to be the appearance of an Exmoor pony ridden display in the Countryside Ring at the 2006 Royal Bath and West

Show. A small group of Society members started training during 2005 and will be practising regularly for their debut at the show.

Another on-going major initiative is the Society's DNA project. With the advent of DNA technology, it is now possible to firmly establish parentage. This is important for situations where more than one stallion runs on an area. This project, which relies on each owner's identification of individual ponies, involves obtaining hair samples from the adult breeding stock to establish a "library" of DNA identities that can be used when parentage testing a foal. Sampling of several moorland herds was undertaken in 2005 and more will be included this year.

Dr Sue Baker

Discovering Exmoor Ponies – video or CD – is available from Parish Rooms £14.99. If you wish to place an order please send a cheque payable to the Exmoor Society and let us know if you require a CD or video

* * * *

BRANCH AND GROUPS

The committees and members of our branch and the groups make a valuable contribution to the work of the Society. If you live in an area where we have a group and would like to join please contact the Parish Rooms

London Area Branch

All the existing office holders and committee members were re-elected at the AGM and amongst other things, I was able to report that the Exmoor Natural History Society nest boxes which we sponsor at Horner, had been most successful this year. Valerie Anand presented *Contrasts and Resemblances*: a slideshow comparing Exmoor with other environments including Iceland, Greenland and Norway, and the more exotic one of India.

In October Sheila and Gerry Eddolls gave us a wonderful evening of Exmoor slides, with evocative commentary. Tradition was maintained

in November when we held a get-together with the London Area Branch of the Dartmoor Preservation Association. Jim Holman talked about *Growing up on a Devon Farm*. Our Christmas celebration in December was most enjoyable with many members contributing to its success. In February the speaker will be Lord Lytton, owner of the Lillicombe Estate where our 21st Anniversary commemorative seat is located.

We were truly shocked to learn of the passing of Lawrie Wills and we wish to be fully associated with all the sentiments which this sad occurrence has evoked.

Geoffrey Huggins

* *

Porlock Group

2005 was another successful year for us. Our membership grew to 90 and we put on more events than in previous years. Members enjoyed walks on Exmoor, field trips to look at aspects of archaeology and geology, talks in Porlock Village Hall and a Dinner at the Lorna Doone Hotel in Porlock. The talks on dowsing, the U3A Photography Group's project to make a photographic record of Exmoor at the start of the third millenium, and Kester Webb's talk on The Hidden Edge of Exmoor, were all popular, with a record attendance of 50 for Kester's talk.

The Committee has been maintained at full strength. At our AGM in October, Jenny Johns, one of the founder committee members and our Events Secretary, stepped down following her move to Northam in Devon. Pauline Clarke takes her place as Events Secretary. Another stalwart, Ann Lang, decided not to seek re-election but we welcomed new members Roy Cowdrill and Maggie Leonard.

We have put together another varied programme for 2006 and hope it will prove to be attractive and enjoyable for members and visitors alike. We look forward to seeing you all.

David Ringshaw

Bristol Group

2005 was one of our most successful years, with a variety of winter talks and summer field events. The new footbridge we sponsored for the Simonsbath sawmills was formerly handed over to Dr Graham Wills of the ENPA by our former chairman Chris Norrish.

Other highlights included a visit to Ash Farm near Porlock, Holnicote Estate with Nigel Hester and a deer farm at Fitzhead. We finished our year with a most interesting film/talk about land ownership on Exmoor. At our AGM in May we said good bye to our chairman of ten years, Chris Norrish and welcomed Chris Stone as his replacement.

A full diary for 2006 commenced with our winter walk in January and our eighth Annual Supper, held at all Saints parish Room and attended by 40 people who enjoyed the perfectly cooked meal and excellent service provided by our own members.

Winter Walk

Our winter walk which took us to Porlock attracted 14 members and we headed up the toll road to pick up the footpath to Porlock Weir. It is an enjoyable walk with the advantage in winter of seeing views which are in summer hidden by foliage. In spite of the drizzle we had some splendid views of Hurlstone Point and the shingle ridge. Views of the lovely gardens at West Porlock are always a treat with some azaleas already beginning to flower to tell us Spring is on its way. The easy walk of about an hour brought us to the Ship Inn at Porlock Weir where we had excellent service and were able to re fuel for the gentle stroll back to our cars..

Peter Gill

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Dulverton Group

I am sure all the Groups were saddened by the death of Lawrie Wills, known to many of us as a dear friend and advisor. He will be greatly missed. However we are pleased to learn that Chris Norrish is taking over as group liaison officer. Chris is a regular visitor to Exmoor and we look forward to welcoming him to events.

Our numbers remain steady and most meetings have been well attended. We were delighted to view the Boardwalk Garden at CARE, Blackerton in June, followed by a traditional tea, provided by the residents. We look forward to another visit in 2007 when the project will have entered a new phase of development.. Those of you who have seen the work will appreciate that this was a worthy winner of the Samuel Foss Conservation Award 2005.

In early September we met Derek Sparks, who told us about the native Exmoor Pony. This was crowned by an elegant tea on the lawns of Ashwick House. Both these events were well attended. In November we chose a new venue in Bampton to welcome the BBC Radio Devon's Matt Woodley who gave us an insight into the pitfalls of live broadcasting.

The programme for the coming year is entitled "A Taste of Exmoor". In November we hope group members, friends and family will join us at a "Celebration of Exmoor" at the Simonsbath House Hotel.

Thank you to everyone who has helped, organised and supported our events. We look forward to seeing you in March at our AGM. I am standing down this year as Chairman. I hope I have helped move the Group into a new era but I could not have done so without the help of the committee.

Johanna Webb

*

Barnstaple Group

Our programme recommenced in early October when Alison Cox, Exmoor National Park Ecologist, gave an illustrated presentation. Followed by question time after the refreshments. Rob Wilson-North came in November, updating us on the latest discoveries made on the moor. In December members were greeted with mulled wine and listened to Hugh Thomas talking about the history of the Fortescue Estate and his years as Agent. Afterwards there was an informal discussion over coffee and mince pies. Our January meeting featured

a slide presentation by Mike Hesman, who leads walks for the E.N.P. In March Sue Baker will be talking about the Exmoor Pony and in April Mike Long will be describing the work of the Exmoor Rescue Service.

Mary Chugg

*

South Molton Group

Our annual dinner took place in February. The spring talk will be given by Brian Pearce who will give an illustrated presentation on the geological landscape of Exmoor on April 20 at the Methodist Hall. Jo Griffin will be leading a walk for the Society on April 8 from Porlock Weir to Porlock, Hawkcombe, Pitheadcombe and Worthy. The summer outing is to Dunster on June 25 and there will be a farm walk on August 6 The A.G.M. will be Oct 26 when Mike Hesman will give an illustrated talk.

Jo Griffin

BRIAN CHUGG ANNUAL ART AWARD

For a painting inspired by an aspect of the Exmoor landscape

Conditions of Entry

Group 1. Age 13 to 15 years

Group 2. Age 16 to 18 years

There will be one prize winner in each group who will receive £125

The work should be two-dimensional and suitable for mounting and framing. It can be in any medium and must not exceed 59cms x 41 cms. It must be presented unmounted

A label on the back of each painting must clearly state: name and age of student, title and media used, name of the school or college attended by student, home address and phone number

In order to cut down on paper work we are not issuing an entry form

Judging, by four professional artists, will take place in late July, Their decision will be final. The Society cannot accept liability for damage to entries or undelivered work

Entries to be submitted to the Exmoor Society, Parish Rooms, Rosemary Lane, Dulverton, Somerset T A22 9DP by mid July 2006. Tel. 01398 323 335

If there are any difficulties with regard to delivering work contact Mrs Mary Chugg tel. 01271375620

The two prize-winning works will be professionally mounted, framed and displayed at an exhibition of Brian Chugg's paintings 'Aspects of Exmoor' at the Museum of North Devon, Barnstaple. On Saturday 9 September at 6.30 p.m there will be an Opening and Private View, when the two prize winners will be presented with their cheques. Their paintings will also be on view at the AGM of the Exmoor Society and then returned to Barnstaple until later in October. All other work can be collected from the Parish Rooms

Winning entries will appear in the Society's publication, *The Exmoor Review*

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