

# **The Exmoor Society**

## **Registered Charity No 245761**

2006-2007

**President:** Victor Bonham-Carter

### **Vice- Presidents:**

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Chairman, Bristol Group: Christopher Stone

Chairman, Barnstaple Group: Mrs Mary Chugg

Chairman, Dulverton Group: Mrs Johanna Webb

Chairman, Porlock Group: John Chiswell

Chairman, South Molton Group: George Jones

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Office hours: Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday 10.00 – 16.00

## Notes from the Chairman

### Landscape

The Society in its long history has been fortunate in often taking up conservation matters well ahead of them becoming at the top of other people's agenda and this has enabled it to provide well researched evidence for its case. In the 1960s the Society led the debate over the loss of moorland which led to the Sinclair Report. More recently it commissioned Moorlands at the Crossroads report three years ago from which it became evident that concentrating on the core conservation values of Exmoor's landscape had been relatively neglected. As a result the Society decided to set up a landscape advisory group in 2005 which has played an important role in helping landscape issues to rise up the agenda in several ways.

First, the emerging National Park Management Plan has a fuller section on landscape which is presented as an major challenge to which the Exmoor National Park Authority will hopefully put more resources.

Second, a comprehensive report on Exmoor's Landscape Character has now been completed and it provides evidence not only of the existing state of different landscapes but also indicates action that can be taken to improve their condition where necessary. For example, such as the reduction of clutter in moorland areas. This is a step change and should lead to a major shift from just protection that is fire fighting, damaging proposals to landscape enhancement as well.

Third, the planning system is becoming more effective in assessing and deciding the negative landscape impacts of development. For example, the Inspector's report on the reasons for turning down the appeal for the retention of an unauthorised communications mast at Beacon Down Quarry, Parracombe makes interesting reading because it is based on landscape criteria. Further, a recent decision by the Society's Executive to object to the proposal for a large wind farm outside the national park on the grounds that it affected the setting of the Park and its landscape character and quality of the special features, was endorsed by the Authority also agreeing to object as well. The Planning section on page ??gives more details on both these cases

Fourth, the Society wants to encourage more policy campaigns such as reducing clutter in the landscape by starting with overhead wires. Friends of the Lake District, brought out a report two years ago on reducing the impact of overhead wires and the methodology used can be applied to Exmoor. Further

details of this campaigning can be found on page five. It will depend however, on volunteers undertaking the field work.

Altogether the Society is calling for a five point manifesto for Exmoor's landscape in order to influence actions and to show the main course of its own landscape work in future.

- 1 A fully resourced landscape section in the within Authority
- 2 Regular training undertaken by planners and decision makers on landscape assessment.
- 3 A larger less fragile national park by extending its boundaries into the rural parts of North Devon particularly along the southern ridge, which are part of the Exmoor Landscape Character Area
- 4 Greater action on the ground with emphasis on enhancement measures rather than just protection of the status quo.
- 5 Increasing events that champion the value of Exmoor's landscape.

We are particularly fortunate that Professor Adrian Phillips has agreed to give the Spring Lecture this year on Friday March 30th in the afternoon at Dulverton Town. He is a world authority on landscape having chaired IUCN's (International Union for the Conservation of Nature) National Parks section for many years. He was an influential figure in persuading the Government to sign the European Landscape Convention last year, the first international agreement on landscape. His lecture will emphasise what this significant event means for Exmoor. A seminar, given jointly by the Authority and the Society, on landscape assessment will be held in the morning for planners decision makers.

It is interesting to note that the vision for Exmoor still appears to be elusive in the draft Management Plan because it consists of a series of statements all very worthy but not adding up to a coherent whole. Is not Exmoor, as a national park, all about the qualities of its conservation assets, well enjoyed, understood and valued by people young and old? Established in 1954 the Park history shows a record of decline in its conservation qualities through the 1960s and 70s the deterioration of which slowed down through the 80s and 90s, for example with attempts to reverse the loss of heather moorland. There is now a greater opportunity to reverse the deterioration and set Exmoor on a clear trajectory of improvement over the next fifty years. There are opportunities that can be bold and redress the balance between the wild and the tamed landscape. The decision by the Authority to buy Blackpitts

bungalow, buildings and land near the Exe's source in order to protect it from future development is a good example of this new approach. However, this is not enough, the next steps to be taken should be to restore a large scale restoration of the moorland character of this iconic area at the heart of Exmoor .

### Reducing the Impact of Overhead Wires

Friends of the Lake District has campaigned for several years to reduce the visual intrusion of overhead wires on the landscape. In 2003 it published a report 'A Clear View: Reducing the Impact of Overhead Wires' which examined and assessed the scope for placing overhead electricity lines underground. Since then, they have been active in putting pressure on Government and electricity companies to take action. Under the 2004 Electricity Distribution Price Control Review, OFGEN included an allowance to be made available to Distribution Network Operators to use capital expenditure to underground overhead wires specifically in protected areas. In the last two years all parts of England and Wales have put arrangements in place and the Lake District has developed a means of identifying priority lines to underground. However, Western Power Distribution has refused to implement any scheme in the South West.

In order to put pressure on them, Exmoor must first identify areas where overhead power lines have a damaging impact on the natural beauty of the park. A detailed survey, using an accepted methodology for identifying the severity of the impact can be used on Exmoor for such places as Porlock Common (above Hawkcombe) Timberscombe Common, Withypool Common and the coastal area around Silcombe and Yarner Farm as well as several villages. The Authority has contacted Western Power Distribution to obtain detailed digitised maps of power line locating. Field work now needs to be undertaken and the Society has agreed to work with the Authority to help in collecting the material. Volunteers are required for the field work which is not an onerous task and should not involve a great deal of time. Please let the office know if you would like to take part in what should be an interesting exercise.

### Planning

#### Beacon Down Quarry Parracombe

An unexpected bonus was received before Christmas, with the decision of the Planning Inspector to turn down the appeal to retain an unauthorised telecommunications mast at Beacon Down Quarry, Parracombe, which now has to be removed within six months. The Inspector ruled 'The landscape of Exmoor National Park is of national significance and is afforded the highest protection. The scenery all around the appeal site is striking and distinctive.

the design and size of the unauthorised mast differs markedly from the approved mast. It has an overall height of 33.7 metres and has attached ladders and platforms. It has been painted in graded neutral colours to soften its impact but its additional height and girth means that it is bulkier than the approved mast and therefore more conspicuous when seen against the skyline.' The Society congratulated the Authority on the way it presented its case which was accepted in full by the Inspector.

The Authority thanked the Society for appearing at the Inquiry and said that Rachel Thomas gave evidence to the Inspector which helped emphasise the landscape harm that the unauthorised mast caused.

(The Inspectors Report is available from Parish Rooms)

### Windfarm proposals at Batsworthy Cross, South Molton

The Executive decided to object to North Devon District Council on proposals for nine one hundred metres high turbines on the edge of the Park on landscape grounds. The Southern moorland ridge of Molland Moor West and East Anstey Commons merges with upland pastoral farms that surround it to the South. It is difficult to see where the National Park boundary ends because of the underdeveloped rural area of North Devon and similar patterns of land use.

The qualities of openness, remoteness and tranquillity extend well beyond the boundaries and viewpoints from Molland Moor and West Anstey would be affected.

Surprisingly Officers of the Park Authority had recommended that no objection should be made to North Devon District Council. Julia Thomas Everard, appearing for the Society, argued that the setting of the park was particularly important. The Authority's own landscape architect had said sufficient weight had not been given to the proposals negative impact on the special qualities and character of the National Park and that planning policies, nationally and locally gave the highest form of protection to them. After a lively debate, Authority members decided to object to the proposals when they come before North Devon District Council for determination later this year.

### **Society Secretary**

It is with great sadness that the Society is to lose Pauline Benett as its secretary who is retiring. After ten years loyal service the Society is more than indebted to her work and a proper farewell will be given later. Meanwhile those of you who may wish to contribute to her retirement please send a donation to Maggie Rodgers, Membership Secretary.

## **Look ahead in 2007**

**Spring**    *Annual Lecture*  
*A new programme of walks begins*

**Summer**    *Joint event with ENHS.*  
*Picnic – Led by Archaeologist Rob Wilson North*  
*Local Shows*

**Autumn**    *Annual General Meeting Weekend*  
*– with the launch of the Environmental Road Show*  
*Society Service at St Luke’s Simonsbath followed by Walk*

**Winter**  
*Christmas Lunch*  
*Winter Walks with the groups*

***The Local Groups offer many activities throughout the year to which all are invited.***

## **Membership Matters.**

Once again thank you to you all for your continued commitment and support to the Society. However, we always welcome new members so please promote the Society to your family and friends. The Secretary will say it again – if every member recruited one other we would double our numbers.

The office remains open to members and we would be delighted to see you whenever you are in Dulverton. Do not forget we have an extensive library of books and archives which is there for members’ use.

### ***Thankyou!!***

We would like to say a big thank you to all those members and others who help the Society in one way or another. Whether you are a walk leader, stuff envelopes, help in the office or man the Society stand at the local shows; or if serve on the Executive, help with responding to consultations, attend planning meetings, access forums, walk and inspect the paths – thankyou – we certainly couldn’t do it without you!!

### **Volunteers**

We are always looking for walk leaders, people to help at the shows and during busy times in the office; and now the Society is campaigning on landscape clutter and overhead wires – we need your help. If you can help please call the office

## Society Events

### **Spring Lecture – Friday 31<sup>st</sup> March – 2.15pm Dulverton Town Hall**

The speaker at this event will be Professor Adrian Phillips a world authority on landscape matters. Professor Phillips was for many years Chairman of the National Park section of IUCN (International Union for the Conservation of Nature) a world wide organisation for conservation. The lecture will focus on the importance of Exmoor's landscape. The UK Government has just signed up to the first European Landscape Convention and Professor Phillips will explain the significance of this for Exmoor.  
*Please see booking form enclosed with this Newsletter*

### **Joint Event with Exmoor Natural History Society. Tuesday 17<sup>th</sup> July.**

Join members of the ENHS at 11.00 in Horner Car Park (GR899466) and visit the EHNS property Luckbarrow House to see the work undertaken there by Conservation Award winners John and Pat Dixon. This will be followed by a walk via Granny's Ride to explore Horner Woods. Bring Picnic and wear suitable footwear and clothing.

### **Family Picnic with an Archaeological theme – Saturday 11<sup>th</sup> August.**

Join Exmoor National Park's archaeologists for a family picnic and an exploration of the archaeology of the Lyn Gorge.

We will meet at the National Trust car park on the A39 at Watersmeet (GR 744 488 – pay and display) at 11.00am. We will visit an archaeological site for a treasure hunt and a discovery session (for 5-15 year olds .. and those still young at heart). After that we will have a picnic on the site. In the afternoon there will be an optional walk of about 2 miles finishing outside the National Trust tearooms in Watersmeet. Finish about 4.00pm

Any one who wishes to come should remember to bring suitable clothing and footwear, a picnic lunch and money for the car park.

**Summer Shows** – Look out for the Society Stand at Dunster Fair 26<sup>th</sup> July, Exford Show 8<sup>th</sup> August and Dunster Show 17<sup>th</sup> August. South West Lakes Trust Fair at Wimbleball is to be held 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> May

### **AGM Weekend 22 – 23<sup>rd</sup> September.**

**Annual General Meeting 22<sup>nd</sup> September at Dulverton Middle School  
with the Launch of the Environmental Road Show.**

**Annual Service at St Luke's Simonbath 23<sup>rd</sup> September 09.30  
followed by AGM walk from Simonsbath 11.15**

**Society Christmas Luncheon – Saturday 1<sup>st</sup> December at Raleigh's Cross  
Inn. 12.30 for 1.pm**

## Society Competitions and Awards

### Brian Chugg Art Award.

A successful exhibition of Brian Chuggs paintings was held at Barnstaple last autumn and the winning entries of the 2006 Art Award were exhibited at the Society AGM. The overall winners were Frances Auger from Blundells School and Abigail Munson from Dulverton Middle School. The Society is very grateful to Mary Chugg for the very generous donation, over £3,000, that she gave following the sale of Brian's paintings.

Details of the 2007 competition appear at the end of the Newsletter

### Literary Award.

This competition proved extremely popular and there was a splendid response, well over one hundred entries from various schools and individuals. It was coordinated by Chris Whinney and he was very pleased with the response. A small group of judges spent an afternoon at Parish Rooms in February, with Chris, looking at the entries. Unfortunately their decision came too late for this edition so results will be published in the Annual Report.

The Society would like to say thank you again to the families of Stuart Harvey Thompson and Eric Simmonds for making the awards of this competition possible.

This competition will be run annually and the closing date for this year is 31<sup>st</sup> December 2007 – see page ??? for details. Please promote this to the younger people that you know.

### **Alfred Vowles Photographic Competition**

This bi-annual competition will take place again in 2008. Closing date for entries is 31<sup>st</sup> December 2007 with judging taking place in early 2008 and the results will be announced in the Spring Newsletter . Winning entries will be exhibited at the Society AGM. The categories remain the same. Landscape, Heritage and People at Work and the competition is open to all amateur photographers For entry form and conditions please send SAE to Parish Rooms, Dulverton, Somerset TA22 9DP and mark your envelope 'Photographic Competition'

### **Samuel Foss Conservation Award**

This award was won in 2006 by Janet and John Dixon for their conservation work at Luckbarrow and in other areas. Nominations are invited for the 2007 Award. The term 'conservation' 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 2007. In the event of more than one nomination the Executive Committee will decide who is to receive the award.

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### **Walks programme 2007**

**Saturday 14<sup>th</sup> April 11.00 Two churches.** Meet at Dunster main car park GR994436. Walk from Dunster Beach to Carhampton Church. Return via Park Lane and Gallox Bridge. 5.5 miles

**Friday 27<sup>th</sup> April 11.00 Around Molland.** Meet Hawkrigde (village hall) GR861306. A walk in the open with ups and downs. 9.5 miles

**Monday 7<sup>th</sup> May 11.00 Cow Castle and the Barle Valley.** Begin at Ashcombe Car Park, Simonsbath GR773394. proceed across farmland created by John Knight to the Barle Valley and the Iron Age hill Fort of Cow Castle. 6.5 miles

**Saturday 19<sup>th</sup> May 11.00 Moorland and Woodland.** Meet at Webbers Post GR902439. Proceed to Sweetery Stoke Pero and return through the woods. 9 miles.

**Sunday 27<sup>th</sup> May 10.30. History, Mystery and Legend on the Brendons.** Meet at Kingsbridge car park GR986377 Visit Luxborough, Croydon Hall, Leighland Chapel and Treborough. 12 miles.

**Saturday 9<sup>th</sup> June 12.00. Railway Walkers.** Meet at West Somerset Railway Terminal, Minehead Sea Front and travel by steam train to Dunster. Visit Dunster Village and return to Minehead via Grabbist and Alcombe Combe. Pub lunch optional. Please bring train fair. 4 miles.

**Saturday 16<sup>th</sup> June 11.00 a writers View – Woody Bay to the Heddon Valley.** Meet at National Trust Woody Bay Car Park (CR675486). Proceed to Hunter's Inn along lower coast path. Return by upper coast path. Pub lunch optional. 5 miles. Fairly strenuous.

**Sunday 8<sup>th</sup> July 11.00 Wooded Combes to High Moor.** Meet at Hilsford Bridge (GR742476) Meet at Hilsford Bridge (GR742476) for an 8 mile walk to Shilstone Hill via Farley Water return via Rockford, Hoar Oak.

**Saturday 28<sup>th</sup> July 11.00 Circular Walk around Whiterocks.** Meet at Venford (GR 870291 – the crossing of bridlepaths) Walk to Whiterocks, Castle Bridge, Brewers and Mounsey Castles. This walk will look at the history, archaeology and land management of the area.

**Saturday 4<sup>th</sup> August 11.00 Brendon Common and Badgworthy Water.** Meet at Brnedon Two Gates (GR765433). Proceeding across Brendon Common to Badgworthy Water, returning via farley Water.

**Monday 27<sup>th</sup> August 11.00 Dunkery's Slopes and Valleys.** Meet Webber's Post (GR902439) Walk across Dunkery's Northern slopes visiting an Iron Age enclosure and Stoke Pero church. Return via Cloutsham and East Water Valley – steep climb to finish. 6½miles.

**Sunday 9<sup>th</sup> September 10.30 The High Moor.** Meet at Prayway Head (GR767411). Walk over high moorland to Hoccombe Water, Badgworthy Water, Larkbarrow and Alderman's Barrow, return via Ashcombe. 12 miles

**Sunday 23<sup>rd</sup> September. 11.15 approx.** Arrangements for this AGM walk await to be finalised. Please refer to the Annual Report

**Sunday 30<sup>th</sup> 11.00 Coast and Combe.** Meet at Hunters Inn Car park (GR653481) Opposite the shop. This walk will explore the combes and coast around Heddons Mouth. 8 miles.

**Saturday 6<sup>th</sup> October 11.00 Hostelry Hike.** This walk has been 'revived' by popular request. Meet at County Gate car park (GR793485) and walk down the East Lyn Valley to Lynmouth via Brendon, Rockford and Watersmeet with stops for refreshments. This walk stops at local pubs. Have a pub lunch or alternatively bring a picnic to accompany your refreshment. Leave a space for tea! Return from Lynmouth to County Gate via public transport.

*We would like to remind members to wear suitable footwear and clothing. A picnic lunch is required unless otherwise stated. And don't forget bus/train fare if appropriate.*

### Education

Chris Whinney reports .....

..... that the Exmoor Curriculum is being extended to other Schools such as West Buckland and South Molton Community College through the award of grants for activities that encourage a greater understanding of Exmoor. This is in addition to the continued grants to the flag ship Dulverton Middle School.

The Environmental Play Road Show is now progressing. The Society, with the Authority, made a successful bid to the Sustainable Development Fund and are making a further application to the Lottery Fund. This has enabled work on the production to begin in earnest. The first outing will be at the Society's AGM on 22<sup>nd</sup> September and it will then travel around in the Greater Exmoor area. The intention is that the play will educate and challenge children who live and work on Exmoor to think about the landscape and instil a feeling of responsibility and commitment.

The first successful literary award is referred to elsewhere in this Newsletter.

### **WSMR progress report - from Michael Hawkins**

During the latter part of the nineteenth century a large community toiled to extract iron ore from a large area of the Brendon Hills, transporting it for many miles by train down to Watchet. From there it was shipped across the Bristol Channel to South Wales for processing into iron to feed the insatiable demands of the industrial revolution. In recent years the Society has played an important part in ensuring that what remains of this great industry is preserved and where possible opened up to the public.

The lengthy and searching process required to unlock nearly two thirds of a million pounds of lottery funding for this project is being developed through a committee of interested parties, including the Exmoor Society, under the leadership of the National Park Authority and chaired by Evelyn Stacey, ably assisted by the national park archaeologist, Rob Wilson- North.

This work is nearing completion, which means that it should be possible to make a start during this year on the vital and long overdue task of preserving what remains of this important part of West Somerset history.

The money will be spent in three ways. Firstly in the preservation of the Scheduled Ancient Monument 19<sup>th</sup> century incline, together with its winding house, Bearsland ventilation chimney, Langham engine house and other key

structures. Provision will also be made to open up this extensive area for the benefit of walkers and visitors as well as mining history enthusiasts. Emphasis will also be placed on the provision of information throughout the site to enable visitors to interpret what is visible and that, which has long since vanished. Significantly, this will be supplemented by the appointment of an education officer whose duties will ensure that future generations will grow up fully aware of what was a very significant part of local history and protective of the memories and physical remains.

### **Dunster**

The Dunster Working Group continues to meet regularly and the Society maintains an interest in this important village. Positive outcomes in the past twelve months are the opening of the permissive path from Gallox Bridge to Dunster Steep – this has proved popular and has been well used. The signing project for Dunster, encouraging people to linger longer in the village, was completed in October 2006. Work on the Tythe Barn is progressing well and open days have already been held. The thorny problem of traffic and parking still seems to absorb a great deal of time and effort with little obvious sign of improvement. However, funding will be sought for the bigger projects and an enhancement scheme for Dunster will be a key priority in the National Park Management Plans which should help to attract funding. If detailed design work was commissioned as soon as funding became available the enhancement of High Street could proceed. In Exmoor terms '*directly*' takes a little while but the working group continues to push forward this issue and Society hopes that at some time in the not too distant key future work on improving the environment of Dunster will indeed begin.

### **Malcolm MacEwen Trust**

For the past three years the Exmoor Society has made an annual grant of £500 to support the work of the Malcolm MacEwen Trust. The Trust, which is a registered charity, was set up in 1999 to commemorate the work of the late Malcolm MacEwen – a former Chairman of the Society and a Member of the National Park Committee between 1973 and 1981. He published a number of books including two seminal books on National Parks and was influential in the moves that led to the major study of Exmoor conducted by Lord Porchester in 1977. This eventually resulted in the introduction of management agreements which helped protect moorland from conversion to more intensive agricultural use and which are still one of the main tools used to secure the conservation of Exmoor's moorland, and the wider countryside, to this day.

Malcolm MacEwen died in 1996 and in recognition of his work the National Park Authority, the Exmoor Society and a number of national organisations (including the Council for National Parks, the Association of National Park Authorities, the Council for the Protection of Rural England, the Ramblers Association and the Open Spaces Society) contributed to a memorial fund. This is primarily used to provide bursaries to encourage outstanding undergraduate or post-graduate students to undertake research projects on Exmoor. However the Trust has also been involved in other research work and, to mark the fiftieth anniversary of the designation of the National Park, commissioned the Centre for Rural Research at the University of Exeter to carry out a major study of management agreements which was published in 2005.

In addition, the Trust funds an annual Malcolm MacEwen Placement Student who works with the National Park Authority on a specific project each year. Under this scheme, part of the Shell Step programme administered by the University of Exeter, a student works in the offices of the Authority for a 8 – 10 week period each summer. In 2005 the successful applicant – Jessica Craib, who was reading Psychology at the University of Exeter – carried out a study of public perceptions of the landscape character of Exmoor's moorlands. The 2006 Placement Student, Jonathon Carter, a Biological Sciences undergraduate at the University of Exeter carried out a study of the control of invasive moorland vegetation, focussing on gorse and bracken.

The Trust is very grateful to the Society for its support and welcomes donations to help it carry out its work. For further information please contact Graham Wills, Honorary Secretary, Malcolm MacEwen Trust, Exmoor House, Dulverton, Somerset TA22 9HL Tel : 01398 323665 or email [GLWills@Exmoor-NationalPark.gov.uk](mailto:GLWills@Exmoor-NationalPark.gov.uk). For information on the Shell Step scheme visit [www.step.org.uk](http://www.step.org.uk)

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## **News from the Groups**

### **The Bristol Group**

We could not have had better weather for our day at Dunster in July. Some 20 members met at the Castle. The option of a castle visit or a walk in the gardens was enjoyed by everyone, the hydrangea were wonderful. A picnic lunch in the grounds before meeting our guide Brian Pearce, who led a most informative walk around the village. It was a most interesting afternoon and Brian revealed some of the village history. We ended our walk at the Yarn

Market and retired for a well-earned cream tea in the Luttrell Arm's "secret garden".

In a perfect September setting we enjoyed a delightful field day with Mike Leach starting and finishing at Webber's Post where Mike introduced us to the woodcarvings created at the 2005 International event.

Our Autumn walk in the Barle Valley took in some of the finest landscape on offer and provided a very good day's walking despite some indifferent weather.

At the end of November a very instructive and entertaining talk by Jack Whelan about his work at Warren Farm was followed by a light buffet which brought our annual programme to a most enjoyable conclusion.

Chris Stone

#### **COMMENTS FROM THE DULVERTON GROUP.**

In 2006 we celebrated "The Taste of Exmoor" with a wide range of events, starting with Brian Pearce's presentation, including the opportunity to sample a number of different cheeses. This was followed by visits to Cotleigh Brewery, Miles Coffee and Styles Farmhouse Ice cream, with a delightful walk up the river Exe and pub lunch thrown in for good measure. The year's events were rounded off by a most enjoyable lunch at Simonds bath House Hotel, where Mrs Norma Huxtable entertained us with a few of her tales as a farmer's wife here on Exmoor.

The indefatigable Johanna Webb has already put the 2007 programme in hand, but I am saddened to report that that is her swan-song as a member of the Group Committee. It is entirely due to her efforts the Group has been so successful over the past few years and I wish to pay tribute to her for all that she has done, both as Madam Chairman and as Events Secretary, roles that she combined for several years. On behalf of all the Group, Thankyou so much Johanna.

At the end of the year we also shall be saying goodbye and thank you to David and Kathie Currie, our Treasurers who have also supported both Johanna and me in that role. Thank you both also for your support.

**The loss of David and Kathie means that if no-one comes forward to take up the Treasurer-ship, the Group's activities will have to be suspended. VOLUNTEERS URGENTLY NEEDED.**

**Johanna has already firmed up a most interesting programme for 2007, but we do need another Events Organiser to take over and make it happen and to prepare the 2008 programme. A VOLUNTEER IS URGENTLY NEEDED please!**

Peter Donnelly, Group Chairman.

### **Porlock Group**

Peter Leather, group Secretary, tells us that the Group is still flourishing with around 70 members and they had a successful 2006. David Ringshaw, having held the reins for four years, resigned as Chairman and John Chiswell has taken over that position. The Group has a full programme of events for the next twelve months.

### **Barnstaple Group**

We are having a successful programme this season. Members enjoy meeting at our regular venue at The Elms. Bishops Tawton and greatly appreciate the efforts of 'the refreshment team' at the conclusion of every talk. I would like to thank every one who helps to make our meetings enjoyable social occasions.

Our committee have decided to concentrate on five meetings a year, between October and March. Many of our members belong to other 'conservation' societies and a great deal is going on in the Barnstaple area at other times of the year.

We had a varied programme in 2006 with a talks about the Exmoor Pony by Dr Sue Baker, Exmoor Search and Rescue, the Orchards of North Devon, and sheepdog skills. In November Maggie Ford gave us a fascinating talk on the Parish Tythe maps of circa 1840 illustrating how they can be transferred onto more recent computer based digital maps. Norma Huxtable entertained us at our Yule Tide meeting in December. 2007 began with a talk about the Combe Martin Silver Mines in February and our season will end in April with the AGM followed by Jeremy Holtam describing the founding and work of the Badgworthy Land Company. We look forward to welcoming new members in 2007.

Mary Chugg

### **South Molton Group**

The Group continues to meet and had a good attendance at the Annual General Meeting. After consultation with the membership we decided to change the day of the week we held our events and hope this will increase

our membership. Our events can be seen in the calendar enclosed with this Newsletter

Jo Griffin

### **London Branch Report**

Preceded by the annual trip to Saffron Walden in the summer the Branch resumed the monthly programme in September with its AGM. Short this year to allow ample time for celebrations to mark our 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary. Special Guest for the evening was Barbara Crippen, the widow of our first Chairman, Peter. A small donation was made to the restoration of the Dunster Tithe Barn – another project to add to our list.

The Autumn meetings saw Clive Fairchild of the Instow and Bideford Railway Group as our speaker in October and in November Anne Savage of the National Trust widened our vision of the Trust's history. This November meeting is usually a joint event with the London Area counterpart in the Dartmoor Preservation Society but sadly they've been forced to disband but we maintain our relationship with its former Chairman and any other Dartmoor enthusiasts who remain in the London area.

Activities will resume in February when Valarie Anand enlightens us on the History of Exmoor.

As we embark on 2007 we're well aware of problems and the committee will need to meet shortly to address these. We hope to find solutions to enable the Branch to continue to prosper.

I must mention the indisposition of our Branch Secretary Annabel Bain – well known in the main Society. She had a serious accident at the end of October and at the time of writing is still in hospital. We've all been most concerned about the situation.

Geoff Huggins

(The Society Secretary adds that at the time of going to press although still in hospital Annabel has improved I – we all wish her a speedy recovery).

### **Lynmouth/Lynton Group**

The Society is still keen to start a group in this area and we hope to involve the surrounding parishes. If you would be interested in supporting such a group then please contact Parish Rooms and we will pass your name and address on to those who have expressed a willingness to take this initiative forward.



## The Hidden Edge of Exmoor :

*Elizabeth Webb asks – ‘Where are the books?’*

The Exmoor National Park has a spectacular northern boundary, twenty five miles long (40 km) Isn't it about time we had a definitive book about its 'wonders in the way of cliff scenery' before the knowledge of its 20<sup>th</sup> century exploration is lost?

E A Newll Arber, (Cambridge paleobotanist and founder of the Sedgwick Museum) wrote the first authoritative book about Exmoor's coast. He provides the answer, as to why so little has been published, when he speaks of the mountainous terrain and the difficulty of access, which make 'walking' the shoreline a challenge 'Similar to climbing an un-trodden Alpine peak'.

Muriel Arber, MA, responsible for the reprint of her father's book: *The Coast Scenery of North Devon, (1969)*, sadly died in 2004; before she could complete her own life's work on the formation of the hog's-back profiles of Exmoor's sea cliffs: a development of her presidential address to the Geologists' Association: *The Cliffs of North Devon, 1974*.

In the late 1950s and early 60s, C H Archer, known as 'Clemmie' of Washford, responded to Arber's challenge that 'it would be a proud accomplishment to have walked the beach from Porlock to Boscastle'. He published details of his pioneering expeditions (in which Kester and Tim Webb of Old Cleave took part; an un-illustrated book it was 'to be kept in private circulation'. (1968).

The lat Cyril Manning, RSPB Warden of Barnstaple is the one person who could have written a book about the exploration of the Exmoor Coast. a skilled rock climber, he was the first of the pioneers to complete, dry shod, the horizontal climb now called the Exmoor Traverse. What notes he wrote he handed over to Edward C Pyatt who reworked them into his own book: *A Climber in the West Country. (1968)*

Rock climbing 'guide books' have been written about most areas of hard rock cliffs in England and Wales, but the pioneers agreed that a Guide would be appropriate for our coast. A website hosted by Terry Cheek, advises competitive climbers to concentrate on the well established climbing venues at Hurlestone Point and inland Valley of Rocks. Would-be explorers are invited to join expeditions led by local guides.

Apart then from diary extracts by Bishop James Hannington, curate of Martinhoe in 1874, and a chapter describing the shoreline of Martinhoe parish

in Harriet Bridle's Woody Bay, 2003, there has been precious little in writing to satisfy the interested.

Only a few commercial videos of the Exmoor coast have been made and it is noticeable that recent national television programmes on Britain's coastline give Exmoor hardly a mention.

In 2003, the Webb family, with fellow pioneer Terry Cheek, featured in a short film transmitted by West Country ITV. This was made to celebrate the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Exmoor National Park, but provided only an introduction to what they call 'The Hidden Edge'

Now, at last, *The Hidden Edge of Exmoor*, the first comprehensive study of the topography and exploration of Exmoor's coastline has been written by David Kester Webb (with Foreword by Muriel Arber). David is one of the original pioneers of the 50s and 60s, who as a teenager was inspired by Clemmie Archer and the work of Newell Arber to explore and make a photographic record of what in climbing circles is now called the *Exmoor coast Traverse*.

This book gives the historical background and story of the coastal exploration to the present day. It provides a full description of the topographical features discovered in this remote part of the British Isles, most of which have never been recorded before. Many names will be familiar – Foreland Point, Valley of Rocks, Heddon's Mouth and Hangman Hills but much of the subject matter can be seen only by the climber and evocative names have been created by the explorers, such as the Inner Sanctuary, 'A' Cave, Flying Buttress, the Claw and Bloody Beach! These latter names will only be familiar to those who have attended Kester Webb's lectures. His lectures have ensured that the name 'The Hidden Edge of Exmoor' has entered the local language.

Colour and black and white photography, maps, drawings and original paintings, in the author's distinct style, are included to fully illustrate the geographical sections of the Exmoor Coast from Minehead to Combe Martin. This book will fascinate those interested in geology, local history, exploration and climbing, as well as in photography and painting. It offers the general public an original and unique view of Exmoor.

This book awaits only a publisher.

## **Society Secretary.**

I will be retiring (not early retirement either!) at the end of March and arrangements are in hand for my successor. Maggie Rodgers will of course still be holding the fort on Tuesdays and Thursdays.

When I first started working for the Society it was on a very part time basis with Guy Somerset the then Chairman, at his home in Alcombe. On his retirement Michael Hawkins knocked on my door to ask if I was willing to support a new Chairman, well you know the rest. I stayed and began working in Parish Rooms. There I picked Victor Bonham-Carter's and Ian Mallard's brains – for which I am grateful.

Times have changed, I have worked with three Chairmen, two membership secretary's, three treasurers and have seen changes on the Executive Committee, different Group Chairmen etc – its time the old girl went now.

Joking apart I would just like to say thankyou to *everyone*. I have been given a lot of support in the job I have been expected to do (its not onerous and some of the jobs only take five minutes!!! mmmmm).

I can't list everyone so if you don't see your name please forgive me but thanks to Maggie for making me laugh (and sometimes cry and see sense) in the office – for Dot and Rod Coyne for their staunch help and wise words on Wednesdays. Thank you to Rachel Thomas for her support, enthusiasm and education on the landscape – to Michael Hawkins who tried to instil planning laws into my dim brain. Thank you to Michael Ryle for his balanced views and to the Executive Committee(s) old and new for very entertaining meetings. Tony Sloley thankyou for always helping me out in sticky situations and listening to my tales of woe! The new treasurer doesn't know what he is missing. Many thanks too to the Groups and all the work they do for the Society.

The Society continues to move forward with new challenges and I wish everyone good luck in the future – oh and one last word, what else –

**Watch your carbon footprint!!!!** Mine will be reduced I won't be driving as much - hurrah

*Pauline*

## **BRIAN CHUGG ANNUAL ART AWARD 2007**

For a painting inspired by an aspect of the Exmoor Landscape

### Conditions of Entry

There are two age groups for a prize: each winner will receive £125.

Group 1:           Age 11 to 15 years

Group 2:           Age 16 to 18 years

The work should be two dimensional and suitable for mounting and framing. It can be in any medium and must not exceed 59cm by 41cms. It must be presented unmounted. A label on the back of each picture must clearly state:

- Name and age of student
- Title and media used
- Name of school or college attended
- Home address and phone number

### **Closing date for entries 7<sup>th</sup> July 2007**

Entry forms will not be issued. Entries to be submitted to:  
Exmoor Society, Parish Rooms, Rosemary Lane, Dulverton,  
Somerset TA22 9DP (Tel: 01398 323335)

The work will be judged by a group of professional artists

Prize winners and commended work will be exhibited at the  
Society AGM 22<sup>nd</sup> September 2007

The Society cannot accept responsibility for damage to entries or undelivered work