

# The Exmoor Society

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The Exmoor Society, Parish Rooms, Dulverton, Somerset TA22 9DP

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## *Spring 2008 Newsletter*

No. 55



From L to R

Sir Antony Acland (President), Dennis Martin (Founders Award), Pat Bawden (Secretary), Rachel Thomas (Chairman), Henry Prout (Conservation Award), Chris Whinney (Vice-Chairman)



# *The Exmoor Society*

Registered Charity No 245761



**2007-2008**

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Sir Antony Acland KG GCMG GCVO

**Vice- Presidents:**

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Mr Jeremy Browne, MP  
The Rt Rev. Peter Price  
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Mr Ian Liddell-Grainger, MP  
The Rt. Hon. J. J. Thorpe

**Chairman:** Mrs Rachel Thomas, CBE,DL

**Vice-Chairman:** Mr Christopher Whinney

**Treasurer:** Mr David Clapp

**The Society Secretary:** Mrs Pat Bawden

**Finance & Membership Secretary:** Ms Maggie Rodgers

**Auditors:** Davisons Limited, Chartered Accountants, South Molton

**Executive Committee:**

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Mr Chris Binnie, Wootton Courtenay  
Mrs Judy Carless, Winsford  
Mr Rod Coyne, Dulverton  
Mr Michael Hankin, Minehead  
Mr Andrew Hawkins, Simonsbath

Mrs Toni Jones, Dulverton  
Professor Linda La Velle, Wiveliscombe  
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Mrs Julia Thomas-Everard, Dulverton  
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**Editors of the Exmoor Review:** Mrs Linda Findlay & Mr Brian Pearce

**Editor of the Annual Report & Newsletter:** Mrs Pat Bawden

**Group Chairmen:**

Bristol Group: Mr Christopher Stone  
Barnstaple Group: Mrs Mary Chugg  
Dulverton Group: Mr Peter Donnelly  
Porlock Group: Mr John Chiswell  
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## **Chairman's Notes**

2008 is an important year for the Society as it provides the opportunity to remind ourselves of why we were formed 50 years ago. In the summer of 1958 proposals to afforest The Chains galvanised local people from Barnstaple to organise a petition against the loss of a wild moorland block in the centre of Exmoor. Although the proposals were withdrawn because of fierce local opposition, it was decided at an inaugural meeting at Simonsbath Lodge on the 29<sup>th</sup> October that there was a need for a permanent body to protect the national park. The Exmoor Society came into being officially in early 1959 as a branch of CPRE. The first edition of the Exmoor Review came out later in 1959 as the journal of the Society.

And so, 50 years later, the Society hopes to celebrate this important anniversary in a variety of ways. Starting with the Autumn Weekend, an exciting speaker is proposed for the AGM on Saturday, 20<sup>th</sup> September in Dulverton with entertainment planned for the evening at Hawkridge Village Hall. There will be a special Service at Simonsbath church on the Sunday to be taken by the Bishop of Bath & Wells. The 50<sup>th</sup> edition of the Review out in October will be a bumper one. More details of other activities will be publicised in the Autumn Newsletter.

The Society was formed because of threats to Exmoor and these continue today although they are more complex and from different sources. Two are highlighted in this Newsletter and are critical:

- First, the Wind Farms proposed near to the south-west boundary of the park that would lead to 24 large industrial turbines being erected. It has been said that the cumulative impact of these wind farms will be the biggest threat to the integrity of the park since the proposals to afforest The Chains. We need your help to fight the wind farms and enclose a flyer asking for donations.
  
- Second, is the crisis facing upland farming and the bleak future predicted for Exmoor's farmers. The Spring Conference on Friday, 9<sup>th</sup> May is titled "Exmoor's Farming Future" and with the help of the Authority, the Society is

organising several important speakers for the event. See page 8 for further details.

There are also opportunities this year to be grasped:

- Proposals for a landscape restoration project at Blackpitts are outlined on page 7. Success will depend on how the members of the Authority react. It will be a test case for whether the composition of the Authority is the right one, predominately made up as it is of local authority and parish appointees (16 in total) compared with those representing the national interest (6 in total).
- The Society is undertaking a strategic development programme that will prepare us for the next 50 years. It will update its current arrangements for delivering aims and objectives and in running the organisation. This has been possible because of the professional help of consultant Bette Baldwin of Richmond Services, and who is volunteering her time as a member of the Society.

## **JOIN US in our celebrations and help us to fight the continued threats facing Exmoor**

### **STOP PRESS ..... Alfred Vowles Photographic Competition**

This prestigious competition for amateur photographers is held every other year in memory of Alfred Vowles. Alfred devoted over 40 years of his life to recording the scenery and people of Exmoor. Many of his pictures from the 1920's and 30's were reproduced on postcards. His son, Roland Vowles has donated a sculpture to the Society in order to award the overall winner.

The winners of this year's competition in the different categories are:

**Landscape – Adrian Noyes - "The Upper Barle Early Morning"**

**Heritage – Mr M Sherwin – "Exmoor Ponies"**

**People at Work – Gareth Morgan – "Tree Surgeon"**

**The Overall Winner of the Alfred Vowles Memorial Trophy is Gareth Morgan for his "Tree Surgeon"**

All the photographs entered will be on display at the Porlock Visitor Centre from Monday, 18<sup>th</sup> February

## NEWS ROUNDUP

### Wind Farms

A rash of wind farms has now been proposed that are close to the national park boundary. As has been already said, some people say that if these wind farms go ahead, it will be the biggest threat to the integrity of the park since the failed proposals to afforest The Chains in 1959. Altogether they include 24 large industrial wind turbines:

- ❖ 9 turbines at Batsworthy, 103 metres in height and 4.6 miles outside the national park.
- ❖ 2 turbines at Cross Moor, 100 metres high and 1.8 miles outside.
- ❖ 9 turbines at Three Moors, 105 metres high and 1.8 miles outside.
- ❖ 4 turbines at Bickham Moor, 110 metres high and 4 miles outside.

The combination of all these turbines will have a significant and detrimental impact on the park and its setting. Views in and out from Exmoor are spectacular and valued by local people and visitors. From the ridge road of the southern moors there is a wide panoramic view with uncluttered horizons stretching to Dartmoor over 40 miles away. The eye can wander freely with very little apparent intrusive development over the rural nature of mid and north Devon. This helps to make Exmoor and its moorlands which are small and fragmented appear much larger in extent. The special qualities of wildness, openness and tranquillity that these views provide are rare in southern Britain. All the turbines will be seen in a relatively small angle of view from Molland Moor and East and West Anstey Commons. From the North Devon link road most of the turbines will interrupt the view over the farmed landscape that merges into the moorland punctuating the far skyline.

The Society needs to fight these proposals with well researched evidence. This will be costly and the enclosed flyer asks you for donations. The Society has agreed to join with the Two Moors Campaign and the CPRE North Devon in commissioning an expert report into the photo-montages supplied by the developers for the four sites. The report shows that these photos underestimate the visual impact. It goes on to produce a set of photo-montages that provide members of the public with a more realistic impression of

what this visual impact is likely to be both individually and cumulatively of the four wind farms.

### **Blackpitts - A rare opportunity for a landscape enhancement project**

The Society has taken the lead in proposing a large scale landscape project on the Forest. The opportunity has risen because of the purchase by the Authority of an isolated bungalow and buildings at Blackpitts situated in a sensitive moorland location. The northern Forest including The Chains, Tom's Hill and Larkbarrow with Brendon Common is the best remaining large expanse of moorland on Exmoor where the special moorland qualities can be enjoyed. Crossing this great moorland sweep is the main north to south road between Simonsbath and Brendon, a five mile stretch with no dwellings or intensive development apart from Blackpitts.

The vision is to restore the moorland character between Prayway Head and Brendon Two Gates to open up extensive views across the moorland and restore its wild open character. It would create greater visual and physical access and opportunities for walkers and riders to move more freely. Overall it would change the character of the place from an enclosed farmed landscape to wilder, more accessible moorland in keeping with the iconic Exmoor Forest at the heart of the national park.

Achievement of this vision will mean the removal of Blackpitts bungalow, buildings, fences and banks on the site and other incongruous elements along the moorland road, and a small coniferous plantation. The Blackpitts area was extensive moorland until the 1920's and the first building erected was a former WWI vintage field hospital. It then became a dwelling but by the 1940's was unsuitable and permission was sought for a new dwelling on the site. Other major changes in the locality include the road improved in the 1930's with substantial roadside banks being created from the spoil; a WWII anti-aircraft battery; and large drainage ditches excavated from peat cutting. Altogether these changes have had a substantial adverse impact on the moorland character, biodiversity and long associations with traditional moorland management practices. Some of the more recent ditches are being blocked as part of the mire restoration project. If the vision for Blackpitts is

realised, then the experience of extensive open grass moors will be considerably increased.

Although the Society is enthusiastic about the potential for the Blackpitts area, it is concerned about the loss of an agriculturally-tied dwelling. Two local charities have approached the Society and offered substantial financial support for the landscape project, that includes the removal and re-location of all the structures from the Blackpitts site.

There is local opposition to the scheme, mainly over the loss of a house for a local family. Provided that a suitable house can be built, preferably in Simonsbath, a more sustainable location, then some local objections can be overcome. All other alternative uses for Blackpitts would lead to intensity of development of the site, and likely to be against planning policies.

The moorland is a particularly rare quality in this tiny national park and much of it is small and fragmented. Here is the opportunity to remove most of the twentieth century clutter and enhance the provision of wide open space, wildness and tranquillity.

### **Spring Conference** **Friday, 9<sup>th</sup> May 10am to 3.30pm**

The Society has been involved in raising awareness of the difficulties that upland farming faces. It's Moorland Report in 2004 identified the particular problems of farming the moorlands. Recently, at the Moorland Forum in October, the South West Uplands Federation provided worrying statistics about farming on Exmoor, Dartmoor and Bodmin Moor. A detailed survey of farmers showed a decline in grazing animals over the last two years. Overall, around 40% of hill farmers have reduced their stock numbers, and more farmers have reduced their beef breeding herd by 43% compared to their sheep flock by 34%. Farming on Exmoor faces a bleak future if the trends continue. The Society with the Authority has put together a programme for the day that poses the core question of what farming is for in the national park:

- ❖ **Is farming for public goods?**
- ❖ **Is farming for food security?**
- ❖ **Is there a future for farming on Exmoor?**



Interesting speakers will include Helen Phillips, Chief Executive of Natural England; Allan Buckwell, Professor of Agricultural Economics and CLA Director of Policy; as well as Exmoor farmer Guy Thomas-Everard, MRICS. Members and friends are invited on a first come first serve basis as seats will be limited. Do come along and book your place early using the enclosed form.

### **Exmoor Society Woodland Conservation Fund**

This fund has now become part of the Exmoor Society. News of the removal of the fund as a separate charity came from the Charity Commission in January. The Society hopes that the transfer will be seamless and the original objectives of the fund will continue. It was set up, as fully reported in the 2007 Autumn Newsletter, in 1988 to make sure that owners of small woods within the national park could help to continue to manage them and plant new ones. Since then it has given small grants to maintain and plant woods and to provide and promote information about woodlands. The fund has recently produced the enclosed leaflet which explains how it will continue to operate.

As part of the Exmoor Society all donations for woodland will be ring-fenced in the accounts. A Woodland Advisory Group has been set up and will meet twice a year to make decisions on grants and requests and give advice on woodland potential in the national park. Please donate to this fund if you love woodlands.

### **A Celebration Woodland**

Many people are passionate about trees and woods and with this in mind the Society has entered into partnership with South West Lakes Trust to establish a celebration woodland at Wimbleball. Major events in all our lives – a birth, a marriage, a special anniversary, or a death – can be commemorated by planting a native tree. South-West Water has given the land, South West Lakes Trust will manage it and Society members and their friends can buy a tree that will be planted on the site, and recorded in a book of dedication to be kept in the tea rooms. An Exmoor Society woodland will become established for people to walk through and enjoy the memories of the special occasion. The facilities provided by South West Lakes Trust will enable an enjoyable day out to be spent at Wimbleball.

## **Landscape Matters**

### *Unfinished business .....*

In last year's Spring Newsletter the Society called for a five point manifesto for Exmoor's landscape. Some welcoming actions have taken place but sadly others have not received a response.

The five points and progress made towards them are expressed as either plus or minus (+ or -):

1. ***A fully resourced landscape section within the Authority.***
  - + The Authority's Landscape Architect, Sarah Bryan, has been promoted to Natural Environment Manager.
  - + A new post for a Landscape Architect is to be appointed by the Authority.
  - The landscape section has very little financial resources allocated to it.
2. ***Regular training by planners and decision makers on landscape assessment.***
  - + More awareness of the importance of landscape assessment by planners.
  - Little training undertaken by the decision makers.
3. ***A less fragile national park with its boundaries extended into the rural parts of North Devon.***
  - No response from the Authority or recognition in the National Park Management Plan.
4. ***Greater action on the ground with emphasis on enhancement measures rather than just protection of the status quo.***
  - + Landscape Advisory Group has begun to develop a work programme.
  - + Scrub clearance in some places, e.g. Anstey Common.
  - + Opportunities at Blackpitts for landscape enhancement.
  - More pressure needed to deal with easy measures such as over-signage of certain sites.
5. ***Increasing the number of events that champion the value of Exmoor's landscape and argue the case for World Heritage status.***
  - + More events and awareness of Exmoor's special landscape features.
  - No response to the call for World Heritage status.

## **Landscape Advisory Group**

The group has now turned its attention to the targets set in the landscape section of the ENPA Management Plan. It has started to identify how they can be taken forward. Planning has been under-

taken for the Spring Conference on the subject of the importance of Exmoor's farming.

### **3MX Project**

It is particularly important for Exmoor to have a record of what it looks like at the start of the Third Millennium. Funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund has enabled this to happen. The 3MX project is an innovative way of using the talents of the photography group of Minehead and District U3A (University of the Third Age) to record Exmoor's landscape as it appears at the present time. The people involved have worked diligently to produce an amazing number of images - over 11,000. These have been taken from public locations and are easily accessible from roads and footpaths or the wide spaces of open moorland. All this material is now available on 6 DVDs and can be used by local interest groups in towns and villages or individual researchers. The Society holds a set of DVD's at Parish Rooms and if anybody wishes to look at them, please get in touch with the Secretary.

**The Honeymead Ensemble  
At St George's Church, Dunster  
On Saturday, 12<sup>th</sup> April 2008 at 7.30pm**

**Violins – Eyal Kless and Tamsin Waley-Cohen  
Viola – Guy Ben-Zioni  
Cellos – Adrian Brendel and John Myerscough**

Will play  
**Beethoven Trio in C Minor op 9 no 3  
Ravel Duo for Violin and Cello  
Schubert Cello Quintet**

These five fine young string musicians have chosen a stirring programme of beautiful music to ensure a truly enjoyable evening

*Tickets £12.50 available on the door or  
from Nick Webber – 01643 841725*

### **AMENDMENT !!**

Please note that the Spring Conference on 9<sup>th</sup> May 2008 will be from 10am to 3.30pm – please amend your Calendar of Events for 2008

## **Historic Landscape – Simonsbath**

By Caroline Garrett

Our local, historic landscape is often more complex than first meets the eye. Unravelling its past through close study and documentary research can often completely alter our understanding, and, ultimately, our appreciation of a place, an area or a view.

Simonsbath, situated at the heart of Exmoor, may strike some as a slightly unusual settlement with a scant collection nineteenth century houses, a small isolated church and no obvious centre. It is not a quintessential Exmoor village, and yet it does form a domesticated oasis in an otherwise windswept moorland. Delve into Simonsbath's past, and the origins of its peculiar character are revealed.

When John Knight purchased the Exmoor Forest in 1818, he made the only residence on the moor, Simonsbath House (now Simonsbath Hotel), into his estate headquarters. His ambitions as an aspiring Georgian landowner, to turn the barren landscape into a lucrative agricultural estate, are widely known. What is less widely known is that Knight was also commencing work on a substantial country house in Simonsbath. Like many landowners of the nineteenth century, Knight was out to impress, planning what the local press named an 'enviable possession'. The old Simonsbath House would have seemed out-dated and inadequate for a gentleman, so Knight commenced work on a much grander and fashionable mansion on the same site. Such a residence would then require an appropriate landscape setting, a range of ancillary outbuildings and a network of reliable approach roads across the moor.

Although fragmentary, the existing documentary evidence reveals the development of gardens and pleasure grounds immediately north of the house, leading up to a wooded, valley walk around Ashcombe. See the photograph on the back cover. Knight started with a mere 37 trees on the site in 1818, suggesting a rather bleak, exposed setting for Simonsbath House. He alleviated such an atmosphere with extensive tree planting, and established several plantations. Knight also began to erect a number of estate buildings including stables (now public lavatories) and a subterranean meat store.

At the same time, Knight invested in the surrounding road network, ensuring all-year round access to Simonsbath along previously unpassable tracks. This

offered the opportunity to further enhance the picturesque qualities of his new mansion in Simonsbath by exploiting the topography to create dramatic views of the house and its valley setting for passers-by. Knight also built a tower on the Brendon road, which a nineteenth century commentator reported to be part of a grander, twin-towered gateway. This folly never saw completion, but the remains of the base of a round tower with a pointed arch, gothic doorway, can still be found today.

When Knight failed to receive an expected inheritance, the plans for his country seat came to a grinding halt, and he died in 1850. His son, Frederick Winn Knight, continued to develop Exmoor as an agricultural landscape, and made a few attempts at mining, but Exmoor never became the exemplary country estate John Knight envisaged. Furthermore, Frederick did not complete his father's grand mansion, and the one, partially built, wing was left standing as a ruined shell, visible in a postcard of the 1890s.

During Frederick's ownership the village of Simonsbath began to expand, and further farms were established on the surrounding moorland. St Luke's Church was built in 1856, following a public petition, suggesting reluctance on the part of the Knights, to encourage the establishment of a village at Simonsbath. When Frederick died without issue in 1897, the Knight family's association with Exmoor ceased and the Fortescue family of Castle Hill acquired Simonsbath House, which they used as a hunting lodge.

Of the many who drive through Simonsbath today, few will be aware that they are passing through the remnants of a nineteenth century country seat, or along roads and past the plantations laid out by John Knight. Imagine how different Simonsbath would be had John Knight's grand plans been fully realised.

Simonsbath is an example of how much there is to learn about even our most familiar landscapes. Discovering their histories is not only highly rewarding, but in order to manage and conserve any landscape it is essential that we invest time in researching and understanding its past. With an informed eye, we can identify what is important, what gives a landscape its unique character, and what we should conserve for future generations.



**WANTED** – Volunteers to help man the stand at Shows and in the Parish Rooms to help pack and distribute the Newsletters and Review.

## THE WATER SUPPLY

### *A sorry tale of Exmoor's Water Supply .....*

I've always had a notion that swapping our private water supply for the Mains has got to be like swapping an old bike for a Ferrari, but since I read the Wessex Water Board's latest publication, I idd'n so sure. It sounds like they 'ave the same sort of calamities as us do 'yer on Exmoor, but in a watered down kind of way, if you get's my meanin'. Mind you, not 'avin' Mains water 'ave never made no odds when it comes to sellin' property 'yerabouts, in fact, town folks thinks there's some sort of romantic ring to water from a moorland spring. That's afore they've cottoned on that the local kids don't chant nursery rhymes half as much as home-spun ditties like: "When the weather's warm and dank, you can smell the septic tank". Worse still is when the weather's cold and dank and blowin' and rainin' and you got to take to the hills to search out your romantic moorland spring, armed with a shovel, a pint pot, and a stop watch. The shovel's for general use, the pint pot is to catch the in-flow, and the stop watch is to time one pint. Which is all very well if you'm a bit of a scholar and can do your multiplicational tables to estimate how many gallons per hour is flowin' in - or out if you'm unlucky.

Meanwhile, back at the homestead, Missus is fightin' the kitchen tap and nort's happenin'. Now it could be what the Water Board calls 'sediment', which is a bit of an understatement for the sort of things which us on Exmoor finds stuffed up our taps. If you tickles around a bit with your finger you could be lucky and connect with the stoppage, p'raps a little bundle of curled up worms, or a twelve inch slimy string that was once a fat little frog. If there's fur and tail then 'twas likely to 'ave once been a mouse. Sometimes 'tis anybody's guess. 'Tid'n altogether surprisin' in these circumstances that the Water Board informs us that the taste of water can vary, especially if you've got what they call a 'sensitive palate'. Well, that's somethin' us can do without, though I dare say there's still some old stagers about who can roll a noggin' of Adam's Ale round their gums and tell the difference between the bouquet of a dead sheep upstream or some horse sh\*\* downstream. Old Uncle Percy always swears that the best water come from our old well 'cos it tasted like gin, but that was more a personal opinion. And back then there wudd'n the water upstairs 'cos he always reckoned 'twan natural for

water to travel hupwards. Mind you, he had a point, the pressure in the bathroom's never been exactly forceful. You'd get better coverage from the donkey up the road than the dribble that emerges from our so-called power shower.

Us all knows 'tis vital to conserve water, but I draws the line at buying new cisterns with half flushes when all you got to do is drop a brick in the top. In my old outside privvy, you got to be pretty athletic with the cistern six foot up the wall or you'd commit hari-kari on the climb up. 'Tis still everybody' favourite little resting place, even after the tin roof blowed off. Nothing dietary you understand, just one of they old windy Exmoor nights, but somehow it never got built back on again so us hanged up an old black broly on a nail and sticked a torch with the Farmer's Weekly in a biscuit tin and 'twas business as usual. Well, that is until the next air-lock, which I don't suppose Mains' users suffer from. I recall our old sow diggin' down to the water pipe in the field, vandalisin' the joint, and wallowin' in the resultin' swimmin' pool with all her piglets. Soon's the pipe was re-connected, the air locks started. It was just like the piglets was washed up in the pipes and was 'ammerin' to get out 'til at last there was one final scritch and a great whoosh of slurry out the taps. Nobody minded the colour, people could wash again, bath even, and a Mother could tell her kids to "rin to the toilet dear", instead of "rin down the field behind thik gorse bush".

I suppose, if truth be told, us is all quite thankful for our bit of less-than-crystal-clear spring water. It've equipped us with cast iron innards to drink our way round the world and never likely to be stricken with Montezuma's Revenge. Only snag is nobody who lives 'yerabouts ever seems to want to leave the place.

Must be something' in the water ..... ! **Anon**

**National Park Society – Park Societies Conference**

**17<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup> October 2008 at  
Foxlease, The Girl Guide Centre, Lyndhurst, New Forest**

**2009 Conference will be held in the Lake District  
on 12<sup>th</sup> to 14<sup>th</sup> June**

## Friends of St Luke's Church, Simonsbath

*Robin Ashburner gives an update of progress at St. Luke's Church:*

The report that follows is purely about bricks and mortar – the human and Godly side of the life of St. Luke's Church is best left to Keith Powell – our illustrious rector. The building and rebuilding work is a story on its own



and though it runs parallel to the spiritual life of the church, what you read of here are the efforts of the church members and the PCC.

As I write in December, the vestry roof has recently been finished with the loos due soon – hopefully by Christmas. It is worth reminding ourselves just what has been achieved to date:

- ❖ A complete new roof in Cornish slate covering both chancel and nave.
- ❖ Re-slating of the bell tower, as well as the western end of the church.
- ❖ The bell has been taken down, sent back to the foundry and has returned to wake the village on Sunday. The bell ringing mechanism has also been rebuilt.
- ❖ We now have our own borehole to provide running water. We have a new ring road which now enables those who cannot walk to drive up to the church.
- ❖ Electric lighting to provide illumination for those who still wish to walk up to the church.
- ❖ The new war memorial carved in Welsh slate is now up on the church wall opposite the main entrance. This replaces the original WWI memorial that went missing for many years. This time there is also a smaller separate memorial to Lord Ebrington the one known casualty of WWII.
- ❖ The new disabled path around the rebuilt vestry needs its final layer of gravel.
- ❖ Last but by no means least, we have a brand new notice board paid for by the Exmoor Society. The board says who we are, who our rector is, and who the churchwardens are. Our thanks to the Exmoor Society.



The next possible item is that we would like to put in a second floor at the rear of the church.

The question is can we go the extra mile and make St. Luke's even more useable? Simonsbath has no village hall, so why can't St. Luke's make up for this by putting in the necessary facilities in the church? If we were to attract suitable concerts and plays, we would need seating of up to 150. We can achieve this if we put in the extra flooring. At the same time we will create a more cosy area below for kitchen facilities, together with an area for tables and chairs for a comfortable meeting area (particularly after services), and/or a more welcoming display area for some of the organisations we wish to support and which have so generously supported us. If we can go this extra mile, then we can make sure the church becomes an even more important centre in the community, while at the same time ensuring its future as a church.

We estimate the extra cost will be in the region of £20,000 – about one-third of what it cost to build the vestry. This will of course mean more effort from us all. Amongst the fund-raising events that we plan to organise is a second pledge evening and this time to be held in St. Luke's.

### **AGRICULTURAL SHOWS 2008**

Dunster Country Fair - 23<sup>rd</sup> July

Porlock Horse Show - 27<sup>th</sup> July

Exford Show - 13<sup>th</sup> August

Brompton Regis Show - 16<sup>th</sup> August

Dunster Show - 22<sup>nd</sup> August

Hawkridge Revel - 25<sup>th</sup> August

The Society hopes to attend the above Shows and is always looking for volunteers to help man the stand!

## **In Defence of Re-joining the CNP**

*Arabella Amory writes in defence of the Exmoor Society re-joining the Council for National Parks.*

Earlier this year the Exmoor Society decided to rejoin the Council for National Parks (CNP) after a period of not being a member. CNP is the national charity that works to protect and enhance the National Parks of England and Wales, and areas that merit NP status. The membership for NP Societies is calculated on a per member basis so the Exmoor Society will be paying just over £2000 a year. A supporter is sponsoring 50% of this for a three-year period.

The Executive Committee decided that partnership with CNP would contribute to the work of the Society as an effective campaigning group and that both bodies would gain from mutual support.

### **For the Society's benefit this would include:**

- Bi-annual meetings with CNP and the other National Park Societies to air concerns and issues of mutual interest, that need to be addressed. This is in addition to the three full CNP Council meetings per year.
- Support for campaigns against inappropriate development or other threats in or around the NP boundary. (Recent example: Wind Turbine development in N Devon).
- Effective punching above its weight at Government level. Being able to walk into any Government Minister's or Official's office.
- Effectively lobbying at a national level and with the media (speaking with one voice always gets more attention).
- A good, instant and constant source of advice and information (e.g. government legislation, such as the Planning White Paper, local and regional Plans, such as the South West Regional Spatial Strategy, consultation documents, such as the Coastal Access consultation).

### **For CNP's benefit this would include:**

- An effective information source at a local level on concerns and issues affecting National Parks.

- A strategic steer for CNP’s priorities, i.e. helping CNP to prioritise their campaigns in line with the NP Societies.
- A commitment of support that helps CNP in it’s fundraising and lends weight when lobbying at an influential level.
- Logistical support for projects at a local level (e.g. Mosaic Project).

**Constitution:** CNP’s Council is made up of representatives of a variety of groups and bodies that fall into different categories. The National Park Societies are one group represented and the National Park Authorities are another. All members of Council can vote.

**NPAs do not pay a subscription:** This is because CNP has a slightly different relationship with each group on Council. They obviously have to work very closely with the NPAs but need to make sure they remain completely independent from them. This also ensures they do not duplicate the work of the Association of National Parks which is the umbrella campaigning group for the NPAs of England and Wales. The NPAs do contribute to CNP by working in partnership when and where appropriate.

## Education & Outreach

*Chris Whinney writes .....*



During the year the Society has been involved in encouraging the Exmoor Curriculum with Dulverton Middle School, South Molton Comprehensive School and West Buckland School.

After our success last year, a further Literary Award Scheme has been promoted and the winning entries can be found on pages 30 and 31, as well as being announced at the Spring Conference in May. However, most of the time has been spent on producing the environmental play (see page 20 for a further report).

*A member from Surrey writes .....* “I know the Society will continue to look after that beautiful part of Somerset in the future, fighting lots of battles and hopefully winning most”.

## TRACKS & TRACES – 'A Story of Exmoor'

**Tracks and Traces** uses live theatre, poetry, film and high-tech, computerised flight simulation technology to switch young people onto the issues facing their environment. It was produced by The Common Players in association with The Exmoor Society and the Exmoor National Park Authority.

The whole concept of the play evolved two years ago from a partnership between the Society and the Authority to outreach children in the area. The idea of using a play was to grab children's attention using live drama, and this combined with video images gave a challenging vision of their inheritance.

Two quotes were obtained from local drama groups and The Common Players were selected on merit as being the right partner due to their reputation for touring environmental plays.

Over a five week period, 34 schools were visited, viewed by 3491 children, a teachers' conference involving 52 primary staff was attended, a public performance in Dunster attracted 49 adults, and the Exmoor Society's AGM involved 100 members.

A DVD of the play is under construction, which will be combined with an evaluation documentary produced by the children of Dulverton Middle School. On the horizon is an academic evaluation by Professor Linda La Velle (a Society Executive) from Plymouth University, to be presented at a 'Rural Futures' conference in April.

Public awareness was achieved by TV's Westward Diary, Somerset Radio and all the local press. This has all been paid for by the ENPA Sustainable Development Fund and the Big Lottery Awards for All, and grateful thanks to them for sharing the vision and so enabling all this to happen. In a recent press report, Chris Whinney said: *"We were happy in achieving all our targets which we feel reinforced the joint kinship between our respective bodies. This also served to demonstrate the complexities that face national parks and their people in the rapidly changing world of today. We are extremely grateful to the Sustainable Development Fund for their support in enabling our vision to become reality."*

### **Corporate Business Directory:**

Enclosed with this Newsletter is the new and revamped Corporate Business Directory. Whenever you can, please support these businesses – why not book now into a B&B for the AGM weekend. You may have a business yourself and wish to become a corporate member. The cost is £25 per annum. Please apply to Parish Rooms for further information.

### **Walks & Events Programme:**

We have a packed year with many varied and interesting functions for you all to join it – see the enclosed Programme for 2008 for what is in store for you all. Do come and support these events, we would love to see you.

### **Looking Ahead for 2008:**

AGM Weekend – put in your diaries now the dates of the Society's AGM - Society Picnic – Field Visit. See the adverts for all these events to help start off with a bang the Society's exciting 50<sup>th</sup> celebrations' programme.

### **Wanted:**

- ❑ A student or graduate to update the Society's web site and digitise the library and archival material that we hold in the Parish Rooms.
- ❑ The Executive would be delighted to be joined by a member with fund-raising and marketing skills. We are amazed at the variety of skills that members have.

### **Co-opted:**

*News just in .....* Dr Richard Westcott from South Molton has been co-opted onto the Executive. Details of his biography will be included in the Autumn Newsletter.

### **Gleam:**

The Society has recently become a member of the Green Lanes Environmental Action Movement (GLEAM) whose objective is to ensure that unsurfaced highways in the countryside carrying public rights of way are preserved from damage caused by inappropriate use, particularly by recreational off-road motor vehicles of all kinds. This is to protect both the environment and the right of walkers, riders, pedal cyclists and horse-drawn carriages to use and enjoy Green Lanes in the manner to which they are entitled by law.

## **Exmoor Mires Restoration Project**

Now in its second year, the aim of the Mires Restoration Project is to re-wet drained moorlands and bring wildlife back to bogs, fens and upland streams. It has been a hectic year with lots of work going on at five different moorland locations.

Over the three years of the project more than 10km of the old ditches will be blocked and the £256,000 spent on habitat restoration to improve the hydrology and ecology of upland peatlands (blanket bogs and valley mires) on Exmoor.

At Blackpitts and Exe Head the National Park Authority's Field Services Team carried out ditch blocking work on its moors in February and March last year. An extensive network of old peat cuttings and ditches was blocked up with over 200 wooden, peat or ale dams.

During the last 5000 years the moorlands of Exmoor have developed a covering of blanket bog which in places is over 2 metres thick. The UK has 20% of the blanket bog in the world and a duty to look after it. This blanket bog has been modified by man over time as he utilised it, particularly for fuel and grazing. Peat cutting, burning and drainage have left a lasting legacy causing drying out and degradation. If action is not taken now the peat will continue to oxidise and disappear from Exmoor's moorland.

In total in 2007 over 480 dams were constructed and at least 2000 bales were put in ditches resulting in 7628 metres of ditch blocking overall and 73 hectares of restored moorland mires.

All the Exmoor Mire Restoration Project work is on open access land so it can be visited at any time. All the sites are remote moorland sites with boggy ground and open water pools so care is needed when visiting the sites.

**To find out more, join us for a Field Visit on Monday, 11<sup>th</sup> August, 10.30am at Brendon Two Gates when Dr David Smith, the Mire Restoration Project Officer of the ENPA will lead members of the Society on a walk to the project at Blackpitts and Exe Head. *Visitors are advised to dress appropriately in walking boots and outdoor gear.***



**SOCIETY'S AGM WEEKEND 2008**  
Programme

**Saturday, 20<sup>th</sup> September**

**AGM at Dulverton Middle School, 10.30am  
and in the evening**

**“Exmoor Garland & Cheese and Wine Evening”  
at Hawkridge Village Hall, 7.30pm**



**Sunday, 21<sup>st</sup> September**

**Society's Annual Service at St. Luke's Simonsbath, 11 am.  
with Bishop Peter Price followed by a short walk and  
Lunch at Hillcrest, Simonsbath**

**Date for your Diary:**

It seems a little early to be talking about Christmas, but get  
out your diaries and put in the following date:

**The Society's Christmas Lunch**

**will be held on Saturday, 29<sup>th</sup> November 2008 in the  
Tithe Barn at Dunster**

**Tickets will cost no more than £20 per person.**

Further details and a booking form will be included  
in the Autumn Newsletter.

## **Exmoor Society Annual Literary Competition 2008**

The Society is this year offering two literary awards for a piece of poetry or prose inspired by Exmoor – its landscape, fauna, flora or cultural heritage - and people's enjoyment of it. It is hoped that the poetry or prose can form part of the school curriculum requirements.

The competition is open to young people between the ages of 9 & 14 years.

**Group 1:           Age 9 to 11 years**  
**Group 2:           Age 12 to 14 years**

Total prize money of £125 will be awarded to 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> places in each group and will be published in the Exmoor Review.

Entries may be hand-written or typed with the name, age of the applicant, name of school, home address and telephone number on the back of the entry.

No entry forms will be issued but all entries must be received by the Exmoor Society no later than 31<sup>st</sup> December 2008, and should be sent to the Exmoor Society, Parish Rooms, Rosemary Lane, Dulverton, Somerset TA22 9DP.

Please note that the Society cannot be responsible for damaged or undelivered work. If entries are required to be returned, then an appropriate sized s.a.e. must be enclosed.



### **Society's Summer Picnic** **Sunday, 20<sup>th</sup> July at Zeal Farm, Hawkridge**

*[by kind permission of John & Mary Pugsley]*

**Meet at 12 noon. Bring a Picnic Lunch.**  
**Farm Walk & Talk followed by Tea**



## **NEWS from around the GROUPS**

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### **Bristol Group:**

In the largely indifferent summer weather, the Group enjoyed a measure of good luck by having a few brief hours of pleasant weather in June for the enjoyable annual BBQ. A visit to the West Somerset Rural Life Museum gave us a glimpse of life in bygone days, before travelling the short distance to Holnicote to look behind the scenes with Nigel Hester, the National Trust's Countryside Manager for the Estate.

During September a field day with the ENPA's ecologist, Ali Hawkins, around Mounsey Hill Gate and Tarr Steps was followed by a cream tea which perfectly finished off another delightful summer visit for the Group. David Clark in October led a successful and well attended 6 mile walk from Withypool. In November Channel 5 presenter, Lloyd Buck, talked to us about training birds for television documentaries. His talk over some impressive footage followed by our now traditional "nibbles" concluded another year's activities, and with the added bonus of welcoming two new members. New members are always warmly welcomed.

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*Chris Stone, Chairman*

### **Barnstaple Group:**

We had three good meetings In the autumn beginning in October when David Kester Webb came to show us his splendid presentation on "The Hidden Coast of Exmoor". In November Dr Judith Cannel gave us a fascinating insight into woodland archaeology and exploitation, and in December Mr J F Chanter with his Magic Lantern projector showed us part of his collection of old glass slides of the Exmoor area.

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*Mary Chugg, Chairman*

**For more information on Society & Group Events and Walks,  
please refer to the Calendar of Events for 2008 which you will  
find in the centre pages of this Newsletter.**



**The bridge acted as a dam until it burst.**



**The garage the morning after**

These photos were taken by John Batten, a member's uncle, using a Box-Brownie Camera of Dulverton in the aftermath of the Lynmouth Floods. In the photo above, just inside the door the water had churned a hole 14 ft. deep into which his father fell thinking it was a puddle!

# THE BRIAN CHUGG ART AWARD 2008

For a painting based on any aspect of the Countryside

## **Conditions of Entry:**

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

**Group 1** - **Age 9 to 12 years**  
**Group 2** - **Age 13 to 16 years**

- The work should be two dimensional and suitable for mounting or framing.
- It can be in any medium and must not exceed 59cms x 41cms.
- Please do not use glitter, edibles or cotton wool!
- The work must be presented unmounted.
- A label on the back of each painting must clearly state the following:
  - Name & Age of Student
  - Name of school or college attended
  - Home address & telephone number

**Closing date for Entries by 15<sup>th</sup> July 2008** to be submitted to  
The Exmoor Society, Parish Rooms, Rosemary Lane, Dulverton, TA22 9DP.  
Tel: 01398 323335.



Judging will be carried out at the end of July by a group of professional artists. Their decision will be final.

*The Society cannot accept any responsibility for damaged or undelivered work.*

For further information, or for any difficulties with delivering work, please contact Mary Chugg on 01271 375620.

The two prize-winners and a selection of other work will be displayed at the Society's Annual General Meeting on Saturday, 20<sup>th</sup> September 2008 at Dulverton Middle School.

To all Parents and Grandparents – please note and pass this information onto any offspring whom you think may be interested. Paintings can be submitted by individuals as well as schools.

## **The Lynton & Barnstaple Railway Trust**

**The Lynton & Barnstaple Railway - Steam Train rides in Exmoor National Park, North Devon. The first phase in rebuilding one of the world's most famous and picturesque narrow gauge railways.**

Since its opening in July 2004 the Lynton & Barnstaple Railway has now carried over 100,000 passengers and in 2007 alone it took over £200,000 despite having only a mile of track. At the Trust's 2006 AGM the Railway outlined to members plans to rebuild the line from a new station at Lynton – better sited than the original which was a major factor in its closure in 1935 – to Blackmoor Gate (as the base of a park-and-ride operation to Lynton and Lynmouth) and Wistlandpound where the Calvert Trust now provides holidays for the disabled.

In 2007 a great deal of hard work went into producing a detailed costing of these plans and it is projected that an investment of £29 million in the Railway will put £70 million into the economy of North Devon within 5 years. In September the plans were presented to Devon's clearly impressed movers and shakers, and the next stage is to seek public funding for plans that are certainly ambitious but also realistic.

Visitors are now once again able to experience a taste of what will one day become, as the project progresses, one of the ultimate heritage railway experiences of the world! For further information and the timetable please see website [www.lynton-rail.co.uk](http://www.lynton-rail.co.uk).

### **HIGH BULLEN HOTEL Golf & Country Club Chittlehamholt, UMBERLEIGH, North Devon EX37 9HD**

**For all Hotel Accommodation and Restaurant Enquiries:**

Telephone: +44 (0) 1769 540561 - Fax: +44 (0) 1769 540492  
Email: [info@highbullen.co.uk](mailto:info@highbullen.co.uk) - Web: [www.highbullen.co.uk](http://www.highbullen.co.uk)

Beautifully set in a richly wooded 200 acre parkland estate. Breathtaking views towards the romantic Devon landscapes of Exmoor and Dartmoor, the 42 bedroom hotel is truly a hidden treasure, between the Mole and Taw Valleys in mature wooded seclusion.

## **The Reverend Ian Mallard, MA**

When Ian Mallard died on the 21<sup>st</sup> July 2007, aged 78, the Society lost one of its most devoted supporters. As well as being a dedicated Christian with many ecumenical interests, he had many other interests including membership of the Organists Association and a lifelong passion for steam railways. However, none of these would surpass his love of Exmoor.

Ian found a way to indulge his passion for the moor through membership of the Society which he joined more than 30 years ago. He was no armchair supporter. He threw himself into Society activities and he was prepared to do anything that was asked of him. Ian led walks, masterminded the annual despatch of the Newsletters and the Exmoor Review, he served on its committees and for a short time even served as the Society secretary.

Perhaps the achievement for which Ian would most wish to be remembered resulted from his interest in railways. He was well aware of the hidden legacy of the archaeological remains of the extensive mining industry on the Brendons during the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. During this period thousands of tons of iron ore were mined and taken by rail down a magnificent incline past Roadwater, Washford and down to Watchet where it was shipped to the great furnaces of Wales that in turn was feeding the industrial revolution.

Ian knew that what remained of this important legacy was neglected, mostly overgrown and in danger of disappearing forever. He campaigned tirelessly and quietly to persuade anyone who would listen of the need to save what remained before it was too late. His persistence was finally rewarded when the Society was invited to take the lead in preparing a project report as a preliminary step towards a lottery bid for the preservation of this unique project. Ian learned just weeks before he died that a substantial lottery grant had been awarded to make a start on the preservation work.

**MRH**



**A competition to appeal to all ages will appear in  
Dulverton for two weeks from 19<sup>th</sup> July to 2<sup>nd</sup> August -  
So, keep your eyes peeled!**

## WINNERS of the 2007 Literary Competition

*Out of over 100 entries received, we are delighted to publish here the winning entries of the Literary Competition for 2007.*

### 'Winter on Exmoor'

The winters on Exmoor are cold and cruel  
But you don't recall them for their harsh ways.  
You remember their magic,  
For each is a different spellbinding fairytale.

Snow shimmers on the ground as a glistening white sheet,  
It suffocates the world for weeks on end.  
Teardrop icicles dangle from the branches,  
Twinkling in the pale sun.

Snowflakes gracefully dance in the air,  
Twirling, floating, spinning, whirling,  
Like tiny ballerinas in white tutus,  
Blissfully pirouetting on the sparkling stage.

It is silent and still,  
Except when the icy wind sweeps through the trees.  
Thin Exmoor ponies plough through the snow,  
With thick scruffy coats, searching, searching for food.

Deer step daintily into the scene,  
They are famished, frozen and frail.  
They struggle to the woods, for some hope of shelter,  
Like all the other animals.

A lonely farmer stumbles across the fields.  
His battered boots crunch through the snow,  
As he hunts for his precious lost flock.  
Winter on Exmoor is savage but stunning.

*By Jenny Gibb, age 13 years, West Buckland School*

## **'Exmoor or not?'**

Is this Exmoor or is this not?  
Are these rivers of sorrow or rivers of hope,  
Would these flowers die if Exmoor was gone,  
Is this Exmoor or is this not?

Why is Exmoor, why's it here?  
Have trees been standing all these years,  
If Exmoor was gone what would replace,  
Why is Exmoor, why's it here?

Wild Exmoor, why the name?  
Would the name be the same,  
Without the river to blame,  
Wild Exmoor, why the name?

Is this Exmoor or is this not,  
Are these rivers of sorrow or rivers of hope,  
Would these flowers die if Exmoor was gone,  
Is this Exmoor or is this not?

*By Beth Williams, Age 11 years, Great Torrington Junior School*

### **NEWLAND HOUSE**

#### **Country Bed & Breakfast on Exmoor**

**Newland House, Exford, Exmoor, TA24 7NF**

**Tel: 01643 831199**

**Email: [info@newlandhouse-exmoor.co.uk](mailto:info@newlandhouse-exmoor.co.uk)**

**Web: [www.newlandhouse-exmoor.co.uk](http://www.newlandhouse-exmoor.co.uk)**

A warm welcome awaits you at Newland House. This traditional Exmoor home is cosy and comfortable with bow windows and wisteria covering the front. The view out over the garden wall looks across open farmland and beyond.

We are located in peaceful surroundings in central Exmoor close to the village of Exford.



Left Dennis Martin receiving the 2007 Founder's Award from the Society President, Sir Antony Acland, at the AGM in September.

Below

The Chairman with members of the Society at Ashcombe, Simonsbath looking at the designed woodland landscape

